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EDITORIAL

TONKIN GULF REDUX

At least 15,000 U.S. naval personnel are now engaged in the Persian Gulf. American and Iranian forces have clashed violently six times since August and still there is no real debate in Congress about the nature and purpose of this intervention. Indeed, there is growing sentiment to invoke the War Powers Act—not to restrain presidential adventurism, as it was originally intended, but to "legalize and legitimize" the gulf policy, as Representative Stephen Solarz urged in a recent *New York Times* Op-Ed essay. Since it's too late to order the fleet home, he wrote, "we must stay the course."

But what course are we on? As proclaimed by Jimmy Carter in 1980 and extended by President Reagan, it's been to insure the free flow of oil and restrain Iran. But soon nearly two-thirds of the area's oil will be pumped out overland; and the U.S. armada objectively most helps Iran, which still ships out all its oil (which is the reason Iraq started the tanker war).

As the sun begins to set over the American empire, and to rise over Japan, intervention takes on a new meaning: regaining by military means the dominance that has been lost through economic competition. A bipartisan cheering section in Washington perceives its imperial responsibility as requiring forward bases in the world's most economically sensitive and politically volatile region.

All this raises a challenge to the Democratic contenders and to anti-intervention forces, who have both historically had difficulties seeing the Middle East clearly. Because public support has been whipped up by anti-Khomeiniism, not anti-communism, Iran has not yet triggered memories of Indochina. But the way the ships are steaming now, Congress will soon give Reagan his Gulf of Tonkin resolution, in another gulf, far from Vietnam.

PEOPLE'S SELLOUT
Daniel Singer

ARIAS BIAS
Alexander Cockburn

CORY'S BROKEN PROMISE
Joseph Collins

V.A. COVER-UP
Mark Perry

WOODWARD: I BELIEVED
Jefferson Morley

LEFTIES OLD AND NEW
Sean Wilentz

THE JACK ANDERSON FILE

MELLOWING OF A MUCKRAKER

DAVID CORN

For nearly forty years, Jack Anderson, one of America's top muckrakers, has waged a campaign against bureaucratic foul-ups, government folly and hypocritical politicians. It's a job performed by few, a "public service," as Anderson likes to say.

A partial list of recent targets of Anderson's syndicated column, the "Washington Merry-Go-Round," includes the Pentagon, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Director of Central Intelligence William Casey, Vice President George Bush, Senator Edward Kennedy, Representative Jim Wright, the tobacco lobby, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the World Bank, the Department of Energy and Zsa Zsa Gabor (for stiffing a Turkish charity for the deaf and mute). Noteworthy and exclusive stories have included revelations of problems with the top-secret "stealth" bomber; the use of substandard and potentially accident-causing bolts in nuclear plants, aircraft and Pentagon weapons; and the biggest scoop of 1986—the Iran arms deal, which Anderson and his senior reporter Dale Van Atta disclosed on April 28, 1986, six months before the scandal surrounding it was triggered by a Beirut magazine report.

But while Anderson has used his column to fight "imperialists, militarists, monopolists, racists, crooks in public and corporate life," as he put it, he has allied himself with characters one might expect a cast-the-first-stone muckraker to avoid. And for a journalist who is popularly considered a liberal and who calls himself a Democrat, it is odd that his extracurricular business dealings and crusades involve

(*Continued on Page 558*)

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LETTERS.

AGENT OF CHANGE

New York City

The *Nation* editorial of October 17 "Has the F.B.I. Really Changed?" correctly points out the broad authority given the F.B.I. to engage in spying under the foreign counterintelligence guidelines. The editorial, however, may be overconfident in its view that the domestic security/terrorism guidelines protect political dissent here because they require "evidence of a criminal act committed for political purposes." In fact, the guidelines require more than that. They state that domestic security investigations are not to be begun unless persons "are engaged in an enterprise for the purpose of furthering political or social goals wholly or in part through activities that involve force and violence and a violation of the criminal laws of the United States." In his directions to field agents explaining this guideline, former F.B.I. Director William Webster reaffirmed that the target enterprise must seek "to accomplish its political or social objectives through violence."

Unfortunately, there is recent evidence that this guideline has been disobeyed and that the F.B.I. has begun domestic security/terrorism investigations of groups involved in no criminal activity or groups involved in nonviolent criminal acts. In August of 1987 the F.B.I. fired John Ryan, a twenty-one-year veteran of the Bureau, because he refused to begin a domestic security/terrorism investigation of Veterans Fast For Life, the Silo Plowshares and persons associated with these groups. Special Agent Ryan was working in the F.B.I.'s Peoria, Illinois, office when he received a request from its Chicago office to investigate the activities of both those groups.

The Chicago F.B.I. teletype stated that glue had been put into the door locks of Army recruiting offices in Chicago and that leaflets supporting Veterans Fast For Life were found at the scene. A car traceable to someone allegedly associated with Silo Plowshares had also been identified. On this basis the Chicago office opened a domestic security/terrorism investigation of the groups. (An interesting aside is that the Center for Constitutional Rights' files contain a report of a suspicious burglary of Veterans Fast For Life's Washington, D.C., office shortly after the F.B.I. investigation of that group was begun.)

Special Agent Ryan refused to participate in the investigation. In a memo to his supervisor he stated that "none of the actions of the 'PLOWSHARES' Group and the 'VETERANS FAST FOR LIFE' Group fit within the Domestic Security Guidelines and the FBI would hold credibility by distancing itself from such investigation." Ryan recognized that the acts committed involved the destruction of government property, and that therefore an investigation could be carried out, but stated that "The acts performed by the 'PLOWSHARES' . . . have been consistently non-violent symbolic statements against violence." As he wrote, "By violence I mean any act that destroys, injures or impedes the physical, mental well-being or dignity of a human being. . . . The term 'plowshares' is drawn from the Biblical edict: 'they shall beat their swords into plowshares,' and most pointedly refers to neutralizing military violence." Ryan specifically criticized the use of such investigations to impede First Amendment rights: "I believe that in the past members of our government have used the FBI to quell dissent, sometimes where the dissent was warranted. I feel history will judge this to be another such instance."

It does appear that Special Agent Ryan was reading the guidelines correctly. Criminal acts, unless coupled with violence, should not be sufficient to begin a domestic security/terrorism investigation. Veterans Fast For Life was not accused of a criminal act. The F.B.I. apparently disagrees, and is presumably continuing the investigation. It is doing so without the services of a very brave agent, John Ryan.

Michael Ratner
Legal Director
Center for Constitutional Rights

WITNESS TO HISTORY

New York City

In her reminiscence about her father's participation in the House Un-American Activities Committee Hollywood hearings of 1947 ["Memories of HUAC," Oct. 24], Patricia Bosworth wonders if his "plea for forthrightness . . . would have done any good in the cold war climate." Instead, she reports, the "Unfriendly 19" and their lawyers decided "they would dance around any questions regarding their political or union affiliations."

There were really two different decisions involved, one a matter of basic strategy, the other of tactics. Bart Crum and his clients Adrian Scott and Edward Dmytryk brought up the possibility of answering the committee's questions truthfully but were persuaded it was a bad idea for two reasons. The first reason was that to answer such questions was to acknowledge the committee's right to ask them, a civil rights issue going back to the Star Chamber proceedings in England. The second was that once you waived your own right to privacy, you had no constitutional grounds for not naming others and subjecting them to blacklisting and possible criminal prosecution. That this issue of naming names was the heart of the matter became clear later when, as Bosworth mentioned, Dmytryk and Crum framed what they saw as a dignified recantation to save Dmytryk's career. What she fails to add is that it didn't work. He had to go back before the committee and give them twenty-six names as the price for re-employment in Hollywood.

The tactic of "answering by not answering" was the contribution of Bob Kenny. He said it was his job as a lawyer to try to keep his clients out of prison, and he saw more hope for that in a jury than in a judge. In a trial for contempt, the judge would rule on all matters of law, the jury on matters of fact. Therefore, the best chance of acquittal lay in creating doubt about the only factual issue: whether the defendant had actually refused to answer the question.

The other lawyers and the subpoenaed witnesses went along with this argument. By the time our pilot cases came to trial, the cold war had intensified and you couldn't hope for much from a District of Columbia jury made up largely of government employees and their families. We probably should have realized that at first and avoided some rather foolish-sounding attempts to claim we were trying to answer the questions in our own way.

Ring Lardner Jr.

UNPRECEDENTED

Brooklyn

Notwithstanding Thomas I. Emerson's reputation and good will, his letter in the October 17 *Nation* is incompatible with the public record. The pertinent dates, which he fails to mention, contradict Catharine MacKinnon's claim to have originated the concept of sexual harassment as discrimination.

MacKinnon's 1979 text, *Sexual Harassment of Working Women*, derived from a student paper written under Emerson's supervision in 1975. The first legal recognition of the principle was won by Michael Hausfeld in *Williams v. Saxbe*. As I have stated before, that case was filed in 1972, three years prior to MacKinnon's paper. The 1976 verdict was achieved, Hausfeld attests, without benefit of briefing by MacKinnon.

In researching the issue I called several lawyers involved in the critical litigation of the 1970s. Among these were Hausfeld, Nadine Taub (*Tomkins v. Public Service Electric*), Mary Dunlap (*Miller v. Bank of America*) and Wendy Williams, an authority on equal protection at the Georgetown Law Center. With the exception of Hausfeld, who had never heard of MacKinnon, agreement was unanimous: She was not an innovator of harassment theory or other equal protection theory. Rather, she has been the primary publicist of ideas generated within the legal community and to which no individual has copyright.

Maureen Mullarkey

CORRECTION

The editor of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Written by Herself*, by Harriet A. Jacobs, reviewed September 12, is Jean Fagan Yellin.

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EDITORIALS.

Judging Ginsburg

The coming contest over the Supreme Court nomination of Judge Douglas Ginsburg will be conducted on all the levels appropriate to an event of enormous historical significance. The public debate and the journalistic investigation have already begun. Lobbyists for important interests critically affected by the composition of the Court will shortly set their strategies, con and pro. Legal analysts and academicians are even now burrowing into Ginsburg's meager record for clues to his judicial philosophy and temperament. The Senate and the President, bloodied but uncowed after Bork, are gearing up for another test of their respective powers under a Constitution that is deliberately ambiguous about where the ultimate authority lies. And finally, sides will be chosen again for a political showdown that opposes the vision of the waning Reagan Revolution against the promise of a resurgent liberalism. Who could ask for anything more?

These nomination wars need not be fought. President Reagan could win confirmation for any number of choices available to him, men or women who would preserve a rough status quo on the Supreme Court and, by extension, the ideological balance of power in the tripartite system of governance. But that would have been boring—and untrue to Reagan's project for the country, which is no less than a reactionary *perestroika* of the political economy and social behavior. What Reagan has been unable to accomplish quickly by executive order or act of Congress, he would do virtually in perpetuity by stacking the Court.

Judge Robert Bork was clearly the man for that job, but

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his lifelong advocacy of lost causes and dead letters was too obvious and easy a target for his adversaries. No one really wanted a Justice who, if given the chance, would swing the Court to repeal *Marbury v. Madison*.

Ginsburg is a much more shadowy target in the liberals' cross hairs. His judicial record is, per Administration strategy, a virtual tabula rasa. As an aide in Reagan's Office of Management and Budget, he gave corporate mergers a green light and a free hand and frustrated attempts by the Environmental Protection Agency to regulate asbestos, apparently on the ground that controls would impose unwarranted costs on industry. A subcommittee of the House Energy and Commerce Committee found the O.M.B.'s interference with E.P.A. rule-making to be an "unlawful abuse of power." And Ginsburg's implementation of a presidential executive order requiring governmental agencies to submit even "pre-rule-making" activities to the O.M.B. to insure that they are "consistent with the Administration's policies and priorities" was characterized by the public interest group OMB Watch as an "admission of an undisguised political interest in controlling agency decisions." He has championed the corporate takeover movement, which contributed to the overheated boom on Wall Street. In an era of declining corporate profits as well as failing public health, his policy priorities are obvious.

Compared with Bork, Ginsburg looms small as a premature yuppie who founded a computer dating service in college. Much has been written about the conflict-of-interest aspect of his cable TV holdings, but no one last week had raised the porn issue. As *The Nation* discovered, at least nine of the U.S. affiliates of the company in which Ginsburg owned stock, Rogers Communications, carry the Playboy Channel, which offers soft-core porn movies. Possibly, some of the couples who met through Ginsburg's dating service now revive flagging desire by watching those. That's what Wall Street calls synergism. We're all for free speech on TV, but what will the religious right say?

Frivolity aside, Reagan chose Ginsburg to replace Bork because he wanted a man every bit as hostile to judicial traditions. The problem with Bork was not primarily that he was of a conservative bent but that he had a mission to organize the Supreme Court around the Reagan legacy. Now Reagan himself says that Ginsburg has been given the same assignment. Such a charge should be sufficient in itself to disqualify him.

Reagan has irrevocably and irretrievably politicized the nomination process for this Supreme Court seat. If he had any mandate for consolidating right-wing control of that body in the first six years of his Administration he has none now, as the 1986 Senate elections showed. A proper reading of national needs and aspirations gives convincing evidence of a will toward more democratic equality, greater economic fairness and respect for both private behavior and legitimate collective activity. The political struggle in the nation over these issues has developed to the point where Reagan cannot expect to slide any of his cronies and clones onto the Court—particularly one calculated to serve well into the twenty-first century. And if Democratic liberals and Republican moderates can find the nerve, they will keep the seat open until the next national mandate is given.

One Step Forward

Mikhail Gorbachev's remarkable speech on the seventieth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution—about the Soviet past, present and future—ought not be invidiously compared, as many Western commentators have, to Nikita Khrushchev's secret exposé of Stalin's crimes at the Twentieth Party Congress, in 1956. The speeches were given under very different circumstances for very different purposes. Such a comparison misses what is truly noteworthy in Gorbachev's complex, almost tortured speech, the full implications of which are not yet clear.

Though Gorbachev was less explicit than Khrushchev about Stalin's crimes, he unequivocally called them "wanton repressions" and delivered a powerful blow to the deeply rooted myth that Stalin did not know about "wholesale repressive measures and acts of lawlessness." Stalin's guilt is "enormous and unforgivable," Gorbachev said, a "lesson for all generations." In announcing the creation of a new commission to investigate the cases of thousands who were executed or exiled in the 1930s and 1940s, Gorbachev criticized Leonid Brezhnev and his cronies for suspending the process of historical justice started by Khrushchev.

In some ways, as a revisionist of history, Gorbachev has gone beyond Khrushchev. He rehabilitated the New Economic Policy (N.E.P.) of the 1920s, declaring it to be Lenin's programmatic legacy, and he became the first Soviet leader to say publicly that the methods used in collectivization corrupted Lenin's conception of socialism. Many Russians consider Gorbachev's exoneration of Nikolai Bukharin to be the most striking part of his speech. Gorbachev's warm though sometimes critical references to Bukharin, a leading theoretical proponent and supporter of the N.E.P. who was executed as a traitor in 1938, give him again, however partially, a place in Soviet political history. Also noteworthy was the Soviet leader's call for a return to the Leninist ideal of socialism, a model radically different from that which emerged under Stalin in the 1930s and one that bears strong resemblance to his idea of *perestroika*, or "restructuring." Finally, Gorbachev—who began his political career at the time of the Twentieth Party Congress—restored Khrushchev to his rightful place in Soviet history.

When Gorbachev turned to the fate of his political program of *perestroika*, he emerged as an embattled but defiant leader. Although he defended the necessity of his radical reforms, the speech clearly suggests that he was forced to make major concessions to those he called "the opponents of *perestroika*." There was no mention, for example, of his earlier call for party democratization. And Gorbachev indirectly criticized his supporter Moscow party chief Boris Yeltsin for overzealousness and impatience, even though his own call for radical economic and political change makes

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him vulnerable to the same charge. Yet, in its attempt to find in the past moral guidelines for the future, the speech becomes a weapon in Gorbachev's struggle for *perestroika*. His way of treating controversial historical and political subjects seems designed to open the gates already pushed wide by *glasnost* to further discussion.

Perhaps most remarkable, in light of its implications for U.S.-Soviet relations, was Gorbachev's disclosure of the debate within the leadership over his new thinking in foreign policy. By opening up to question deeply rooted beliefs about capitalism, Gorbachev laid bare the struggle over his policy of improving ties with the United States, his abandonment of the traditional view of a unified Communist movement ineluctably at war with capitalism and his tolerance for diversity and independence within the socialist movement. Gorbachev used this anniversary speech to do battle with those at home and abroad who fear the long-term implications of a more moderate, economically vigorous and democratic Soviet Union.

At the moment, Gorbachev appears to be in a strong position to continue pushing Soviet foreign policy in the direction of moderation and compromise on arms control, at the United Nations and in the Middle East. Ironically, in all these areas, without reciprocal American action Gorbachev's words have taken on greater importance than his deeds.

People's Sellout

Wall Street did not simply drag Europe's exchanges down in its fall. It also shattered the phony American Dream, the totally invented vision of "popular capitalism" and "share-owning democracy." It did so by suddenly revealing the racket on which rested the fashionable ideology—private is beautiful, while public is wicked and wasteful—namely, the crooked game of privatization practiced for more than five years now in Britain and for roughly a year in France.

From the beginning, a country seeking to take part in the game had to have a solid inventory of public property and a willingness to sell it at bargain-basement prices. Naturally, only the most profitable items would go. The Thatcher government did not denationalize coal and steel; it sold British Airways, Rolls-Royce, British Gas and British Telecom. The French chose banks like Société Genèrale and Paribas, conglomerates like the General Electric Company and St. Gorbin. The system had plenty of advantages for the rulers. It provided several billions of dollars a year in revenue, enabling the government to cut taxes, most substantially for the rich, while insuring that the heights of the economy were commanded by capitalist friends. The French even invented a mechanism by which the controlling interest in each case went to the political pals of Prime Minister Chirac.

But the ambition was greater than that. The aim was also to bribe a segment of the lower middle classes and of skilled workers, thus throwing the labor movement on the defensive. Assured of making a big profit by selling the shares outright, buyers lined up by the millions. Politically, at least, the operation was most successful. Neil Kinnock and the Labor Party in Britain, François Mitterrand and the Socialists in France, became at first discreet and then totally silent on the subject of renationalization. Only a month ago in Blackpool, Maggie Thatcher could triumphantly pretend, "There are more shareholders than trade unionists."

It was a strange casino, in which the only losers were outsiders—that is to say, nongambling citizens, whose alleged assets were being disposed of on the cheap. The successful sale was supposed to last as long as assets were available. It didn't. The system depended not only on deliberate underpricing but also on an artificially booming market. When the bubble burst, most French stockholders discovered that their shares in newly privatized firms were not worth the price they had paid for them. In Britain, the collapse could not have come at a more awkward moment. Thatcher was about to sell the "crown jewel," the state's remaining stake in British Petroleum, in the biggest equity offering ever, at $12.4 billion. Black Monday altered the terms altogether. Instead of the 5 million investors originally expected, only 270,000 turned up. (Even this was proof of the power of advertising, since they were buying shares at well over the market price.) The underwriters of the offer, who stood to lose some $1.9 billion, were begging for the deal to be canceled. The British securities firms had at least spread their risks. The Americans had not.

Technical obstacles, however, could still be overcome. The Thatcher government finally decided that the underwriters, having made pots of money in the past, could take a beating on this occasion. But to prevent the B.P. shares from then being dumped and breaking the floor, the Bank of England, forgetting great liberal principles, agreed to buy them back at any time for the next one or two months at a fixed price. Meanwhile, the French simply put off the denationalization of Matra, the arms and engineering conglomerate, as well as of U.A.P., the biggest insurance company.

It is in France that the immediate political impact of the crash is greatest. Chirac must face a presidential election in six months. He and his Finance Minister, Edouard Baladur, were relying on privatization to provide both the funds for a pre-election bonanza and a semblance of political philosophy. They are now deprived of both. Chirac's loss is a gain for Mitterrand, cleverly avoiding to say whether he will stand for re-election, and above all for Raymond Barre, his chief conservative competitor.

But the damage goes well beyond such electoral calculations. The myth of popular capitalism cannot be propped up like B.P. shares. With the collapse of the market and the international financial crisis foreshadowing a deeper depression, it is increasingly difficult to describe the free market as the best guide to rational behavior. The share-owning democracy can now be seen plainly as a fraud. The ruling ideology lies shattered. The snag is that the respectable left, itself converted to "enterprise culture" and the cult of the market, looks, for the moment, unable to offer a radical alternative.

DANIEL SINGER

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BEAT THE DEVIL.

The Press and the Plan

Mireya Lucero is a Salvadoran woman of 25, a peasant organizer who has lost nine members of her family, including her husband and her brother, to rightist terror. Early last week she sat in *The Nation*'s offices and remarked, "Every time I look at this plan I say to myself, 'They didn't make this plan for El Salvador; they made it against Nicaragua.'" She was talking about the Arias plan, and in the columns of the U.S. mainstream press can be found copious proofs of the accuracy of her observation. The words "state-influenced press" do no justice to the docility with which the major U.S. news media have followed the agenda of the Reagan Administration and, it seems fair to say, of Oscar Arias himself in invoking the plan exclusively to cast suspicion on the intentions of the Sandinistas while ignoring the outrages to peace and decency being wrought on a daily basis by El Salvador and, to a lesser though significant extent, Honduras and Guatemala.

Anaya's Murder

On October 26 assassins certainly sponsored by and probably belonging to the Salvadoran security forces murdered Herbert Ernesto Anaya, head of the Salvadoran Human Rights Commission and the last survivor of that commission's eight founders. Anaya had been arrested on May 26, 1986, on what an Associated Press reporter called "suspicion of secretly collaborating with the rebels." He was held without trial in Mariona prison where, along with four other members of the commission, he began to interview fellow political prisoners about their treatment. Readers of "Beat the Devil" for February 21 may recall that the subsequent report, written up by Anaya, was smuggled out of the prison and ultimately released in the United States through the offices of the Marin Interfaith Task Force. The compelling record of systematic torture passed almost without comment in the press, which similarly failed to mention the report even after its author had been murdered.

Anaya was released in February, and he spent the ensuing months publicly working at the commission. All summer long, both before and after the Arias plan was signed in August, he was targeted by the Treasury Police and by the press office of the military, which instigated a strenuous campaign, mostly through advertisements in the media, linking Anaya with the guerrillas and calling the commission a front for the F.M.L.N. He was under surveillance and had received death threats. These efforts to intimidate El Salvador's most prominent human rights activist elicited neither protest nor protection from the Salvadoran government, headed by José Napoleón Duarte, or from any representative of the U.S. government.

Anaya was shot by two men in civilian clothes using automatic pistols with silencers. The deed bore the unmistakable marks of a death squad hit, a fact acknowledged even by the "Western diplomats" cited by *The New York Times*'s Lindsey Gruson; yet on October 28, Duarte said, "The left has been looking for a martyr for a year. And they have one, whether they did it themselves or someone else did it for them. They've been parading the body through the streets to create terror." Ponder the rhetoric of a man hailed as a moral and political titan by the U.S. press and projected as an authentic peace seeker in contrast to the base Sandinistas.

Peculiarly macabre was Duarte's claim that the left had been looking for a martyr, a charge the military also made when a union leader was shot in the course of a demonstration outside Mariona prison last May. One would think that the 40,000 Salvadorans killed by death squads since 1980 would have supplied martyrs enough by now. But as Gruson wrote in *The Times* for October 29, Anaya, like the seven commission leaders killed or "disappeared" in the previous seven years, "often tested the limits of permitted dissent by accusing the Government and the armed forces of organizing death squads." Notice again the corruption of language. Just as for Duarte protesters are terrorists, so for Gruson the victims, having apparently provoked the government past the point of forbearance, are instigators of their own victimization.

An A.P. story called Anaya's killing "unusual because the incidence of political assassinations has fallen sharply in El Salvador since the early 1980s, before the election of José Napoléon Duarte as President in 1984." Duarte is thus forgotten as the man who in the early 1980s presided over one of the most horrifying passages of right-wing violence in Central American history. And what of present realities? In *The Washington Post*, William Branigan similarly spoke of the death squads as "largely dormant" and cited declining murder statistics as evidence. But as groups like El Rescate and Americas Watch report, and as Mireya Lucero testifies from personal experience, the numbers tell but a truncated story. Selective killings of community leaders, labor organizers, human rights workers, rural activists and others have replaced wholesale massacres. Individuals are regularly arrested, detained without charge and released after seventy-two hours, though not before being tortured and threatened. In the countryside indiscriminate bombing continues, as does forced evacuation and recruitment by the military. Efforts by refugees to return to their homes are consistently interfered with, despite explicit provisions of the Arias plan concerning the right of resettlement. Just since the signing of the plan, El Rescate (2675 West Olympic Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90006) has compiled a chronology of every kind of abuse, and a United Nations committee has expressed its alarm over the intensified activities of death squads. Meanwhile, the United States supports Duarte's war against the population and props up his deteriorating economy with a sum equivalent to 81 percent of El Salvador's budget.

Our Democracy and Theirs

Consider at this point the case of Lino Hernandez in Nicaragua. Hernandez is the head of the Permanent Commission on Human Rights, the group in receipt of U.S. funds from the National Endowment for Democracy, funneled via Prodemca. On August 15 he was arrested and sentenced to

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thirty days in prison, along with the secretary general of the Conservative Party, Alberto Saborio, for holding a demonstration without a permit. This prompted a mighty uproar in Washington, and the Coordinadora, which had organized the demonstration, vowed to continue testing the government's commitment to democratization. Hernandez and Saborio were released after an appeal from Senator Tom Harkin.

Following Anaya's murder, Representative Joseph Moakley asked his colleagues to sign a letter to Duarte expressing "regret" at the government's abuses against opposition political groups and human rights organizations, and assailing the recently passed blanket amnesty, of which more later. To an aide suggesting the letter could be stronger, Moakley said that unfortunately it was probably already too stiff for many in Congress. He was right; in the end about sixty endorsed it, and many of the shirkers were liberals.

Thus the arrest in Nicaragua of a human rights leader on the take from the U.S. government is considered an affront to democracy even though laws governing the conduct of demonstrations are nothing out of the ordinary, whereas the murder in El Salvador of a man who spoke out for human rights and against the amnesty is a matter of political delicacy. But then this is the same Congress that two weeks earlier gave Duarte four standing ovations, capped by a special embrace from Senator Edward Kennedy, after a speech in which the Salvadoran President denounced the Sandinistas for refusing to negotiate with the *contras*.

With the exception of its leaders and spokespersons, the Human Rights Commission in El Salvador keeps the names of its members secret for the sake of security. Those same leaders have been arrested, threatened, tortured and killed as sympathizers of the F.M.L.N. The ascription "guerrilla sympathizer" is a death sentence, yet it has been used in connection with Anaya's group by both the U.S. Embassy in El Salvador and by the Duarte government. The repression of civilian opposition is euphemized as "permitted dissent," the press is used by the military to pass the sentence of death on Anaya, and the opposition press, extinct since the early 1980s, is unlamented by those in the United States who discourse regularly on the beauties of press freedom . . . in Nicaragua. The one Salvadoran newspaper, *El Mundo*, that does accept political advertising from the opposition requires those who take out the ads to sign their names and give their I.D. numbers for publication. Nonetheless, in an exceptionally foolish Op-Ed piece on October 27, former *New York Times* senior editor John Oakes had the effrontery to say, "Press freedom has rarely if ever existed anywhere in Central America except for Costa Rica. However, the Sandinistas have further to go to attain it than their neighbors, whose own press controls are now applied mainly through quasi-official threats and enforced self-censorship."

Deadly Warning

The killing of Anaya may be seen as a message to Ruben Zamora and other opposition leaders pondering a return to El Salvador. (It was also, no doubt, a warning to Salvadorans participating in huge and enthusiastic demonstrations when the F.M.L.N. representatives came into town for negotiations.) Now, in the week that Anaya was killed *The New York Times* had no less than five major contributions—in news, editorial and Op-Ed pages—about the Sandinistas' refusal to negotiate with the *contra* leadership. In a front-page story on October 29 titled "Sandinistas Urged by Arias to Yield on Contra Talks," James LeMoyne summarized the Nobel laureate's position thus: "Nicaragua's continued refusal to negotiate a cease-fire with American-backed guerrillas remain[s] the main obstacle to a settlement of guerrilla wars in the region and to the greater political freedom called for in the peace accord." In the whole long story, in which a friend of Arias was quoted as saying, "He is hurt by the intransigence and dogmatism of the Sandinistas," there was not a single mention of the very practical demonstration of hostility to such negotiation in El Salvador.

Now the Constituent Assembly has passed an amnesty insuring freedom for every butcher in the country. Under its terms the death squads would be protected from any future prosecution. Lindsey Gruson of *The Times* called this "the most concrete step toward complying with the regional peace plan." Arias seems untroubled that his plan is being used to countenance crimes against humanity. And the State Department, expressing no qualms about a law that excuses deeds once construed by Congress as reason to suspend aid to El Salvador, will make it merely another weapon against Sandinista "intractability."

The cynicism of the entire operation is fathomless. Since August 7 the Duarte government has negotiated with the guerrillas while brutalizing their civilian sympathizers and has initiated an amnesty that mocks justice. Neither action is a solution to Salvadoran problems; both are convenient tools with which to harass Nicaragua. Sandinista demonstrations of good faith in terms of democratization and internal reconciliation (the plan does not require talks with *contra* leaders) are as nothing. Undiminished is the enthusiasm of Arias and the politico-journalistic consensus in the United States for throwing El Salvador to the dogs while either forcing the Sandinistas to cut their own throat or cutting it for them if they refuse the task.

The final irony is that no one seems to remember or want to remember that virtually everything in the Arias plan was promulgated by the Sandinistas unilaterally in 1984 prior to the elections. They set up an amnesty program under which, to date, almost 5,000 *contras* have been repatriated. There were provisions for the registration of political parties and an opening for these parties to contest elections. Emergency measures were lifted except those governing censorship of war-related stories, which stories were nonetheless printed up and made available at embassies. There were open, legal demonstrations. U.S. military aid to the *contras* in 1985 prompted the reimposition of the emergency, but the amnesty program has been renewed every year. Perhaps the President of Costa Rica should share his prize with his neighbors to the north, who have more to lose and more to forgive.

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BELTWAY BANDITS.

DAVID CORN
JEFFERSON MORLEY

■ Round Up the Usual Suspects

From the people who brought you Prodemca, one of the groups hired by Carl (Spitz) Channell to lobby for *contra* aid, comes the Central American Peace and Democracy Watch, which has claimed for itself the task of monitoring implementation of the Arias plan. According to its promotional material, the Watch is made up of citizens "from both political parties and a broad range of interests and organizations." Yet its roster of forty-eight original sponsors includes nine board members or officials of Prodemca and several members of the pro-*contra* pantheon, including Robert Leiken, Ronald Radosh and Bernard Aronson, a speechwriter for Mondale turned lobbyist for *contra* aid. The organization had as its first base of operations the office of Penn Kemble, the president of Prodemca. Despite this lineup, the Watch, which is chaired by former Virginia Governor Charles Robb, promises it will resist any temptation to strike a position on *contra* aid.

On November 1 the Watch sent to Central America a delegation headed by New York City Mayor Edward Koch and including Ted Sorensen, the liberal Democrat and former aide to President Kennedy. How did Sorensen get hooked up with this bunch? "He's a true liberal, but he has nonelectoral political aspirations," one associate speculated. Put less politely, he would like a government post and thinks this might help. Then there's the Koch connection. Sorensen's wife, Gillian, heads the New York City Commission for United Nations and Consular Corps. She was appointed by Koch. Sorensen did not return our call.

Contra cheerleaders like Leiken, Kemble et al. make unlikely—if not wholly unreliable—monitors of the Arias plan. If Leiken is at all representative, it seems the group may wish that Arias had never left San José. At a September 29 panel discussion conducted by the Ethics and Public Policy Center, Leiken called the peace plan "a big step back" in that it is "weakening and perhaps extinguishing this main source of pressure which has produced the conditions for the Arias plan, that is, the *contras*."

■ The Contra-Euromissile Connection

Four years ago Charles Wick, director of the United States Information Agency, convened a meeting at the White House with President Reagan, Vice President Bush, media mogul Rupert Murdoch, European press baron Jimmy Goldsmith and Metromedia chair John Kluge. At a hearing of the House Subcommittee on International Operations last March, Wick said that these "members of the private sector" had been asked to disseminate in Europe information favoring the deployment of U.S. cruise and Pershing 2 missiles. The meeting, he added, "had nothing to do with any money raising."

But a National Security Council memorandum dated May 20, 1983, and recently released by the Iran/*contra* committees tells a different story. Two months after the White House gathering, it reports, Roy Godson, an N.S.C. consultant and minor figure in the scandal, met with the "group of private donors that Charlie Wick [had] brought to the [White House] sitroom." The group "made their first commitment of $400,000 which includes support to Freedom House, a pro-INF [intermediate-range nuclear forces] group in Holland, Accuracy in Media, and a European based labor program." The memo, written for then-national security adviser William Clark, promised "More to follow."

If the memo is accurate, it shows that before the Administration turned to outside groups for *contra* support, the White House—perhaps including Reagan and Bush—had already begun to privatize foreign policy. Bruce McColm, deputy director of Freedom House, said that his organization never saw any of this money. Deborah Lambert, spokeswoman for Accuracy in Media, the self-appointed right-wing media watchdog, maintained that her group also received no White House gold. Asked if AIM had checked whether contributions it acquired were linked to the Wick meeting, Lambert refused to say.

■ Allies Pick Up Tab

What do Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and the Defense Budget Project, known for its criticisms of the Pentagon, have in common? The belief that, popular rhetoric aside, NATO allies do pick up their fair share of the alliance's tab. Heated accusations that European members of NATO are running out on the bill (while beating the United States at the trade game) have been hurled on both sides of the aisle in Congress. Representative Patricia Schroeder, for one, has trumpeted a measure that would tax an ally's exports to the United States at a rate equal to the difference between the U.S. share of G.N.P. spent on NATO defense and that of the ally.

However, in little-noticed testimony before a House Budget Committee task force, Gordon Adams, director of the Defense Budget Project, previewed a study his group will release in late November disproving the ally-bashers. In claiming the Europeans are not meeting their obligation, the time-to-get-tough types in Congress rely on total military spending as a percentage of gross national product. But when Adams's group adjusted data to exclude the United States' non-NATO commitments, U.S. spending for NATO came to 3.92 percent of G.N.P., ranking it fifth among alliance nations. Great Britain, which does not have extensive non-European military commitments, doles out 5.26 percent of its G.N.P. for defense.

So what is Adams's political point? "If the problem is how to assure security at the least cost," he said, "we have to address it directly, not by taking cheap shots at our allies." Adams does not agree with what appears to be the Pentagon's view: that ally-bashing gets in the way of a U.S.-led NATO buildup of conventional weapons. Rather, he explained, it "only deters meaningful proposals for conventional arms reduction in Europe, force restructuring, and any reconfiguring of European defense arrangements. It focuses attention on the wrong set of problems and options. The real question is how to have less weapons, pay less and get more security."

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ARTICLES.

PHILIPPINE LAND REFORM

Cory's Broken Promise

JOSEPH COLLINS

"Broken Promises in the Land of Promise" was the title Corazon Cojuanco Aquino chose for one of only two policy speeches she made during her presidential campaign against Ferdinand Marcos. In the speech she pledged that first on her list of social-policy priorities was an "equitable sharing of the ownership and benefits of land." Recognizing the strength of landowner opposition to a redistribution, she announced that she would make an example of her family's own Hacienda Luisita, perhaps the country's largest sugar cane plantation.

But almost two years later, Aquino has utterly failed to keep her promise of land reform, despite having had an unrepeatable opportunity to do so. Not only was she swept into office with a mandate for serious change—one public opinion survey revealed that 63 percent of Filipinos strongly favored land reform—but she enjoyed a national and international stature bordering on sainthood, which gave her unparalleled moral leverage. Moreover, for the seventeen months before a Congress was elected, she possessed full lawmaking powers, something other presidents only dream about.

Agrarian reform is urgently needed in the Philippines. In a country where more than 70 percent of the population is rural, no fewer than seven out of ten Filipinos who depend on farming for their livelihood do not own the land they cultivate. About a third of these landless peasants are tenant farmers. Forced to pay high cash rents or turn over as much as two-thirds of their crops to absentee landlords, they are locked into poverty. Often even worse off are the landless who are farm workers. They are paid less than the scandalously low minimum wage. Many sugar cane plantation workers are unemployed for months every year, often working without pay in planting and weeding stages so as to have the "privilege" of being hired at harvest time.

Despite a 5 percent annual growth in agricultural production during the Marcos years, the proportion of rural families living in poverty rose from 48 percent in 1971 to 55 percent in 1975, and to 63 percent in 1985. Even the World Bank, a longtime believer in the trickle-down effect of overall growth, conceded in a recent confidential report on land reform in the Philippines that "investments and projects intended to increase agricultural productivity have brought few benefits to those not owning land—the landless laborers and tenants."

The tightly concentrated ownership of farmland, by depriving the majority of cultivators of both the motivation and the means to improve farm productivity, has held down Philippine crop yields to among the lowest in Asia. Although high-yield "miracle" rice was first developed in the Philippines, the average output on its largely tenanted rice farms is less than half the figure attained in Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, North Korea and China—countries in which sweeping land reform did away with tenant farming. And, although the plantation owners, or *hacenderos*, tout "economies of scale," Philippine sugar cane plantations produce on average only about half as much cane per acre as the small (two and a half to five acres) owner-operated sugar cane farms of Taiwan.

Land reform is politically imperative. As Representative Stephen Solarz, Aquino's most ardent backer in the U.S. Congress, says, "The Philippines will see either agrarian reform or agrarian revolution." It is the sons and daughters of tenant farmers and landless farm workers who have swollen the ranks of the New People's Army to a force of 30,000 full- and part-time guerrillas, active in sixty-three of the country's seventy-three provinces, and it is the rural poor who provide the N.P.A. with its base of logistical support. The N.P.A. itself promises "a genuine land reform that will liberate the peasants from feudal and semifeudal exploitation" and already has fostered minimal land reform in areas where it has substantial control.

Visiting some of these N.P.A. reform areas recently, I found that peasant negotiations with landowners had lowered rents and raised wages—ironically, often to the levels set but never enforced by the government. Only when the owners are judged despotic are their lands seized and redistributed. (Such owners, I was told, include those who repeatedly refuse to negotiate with their tenants and workers, those who grab land violently and especially those who call in goon squads or the military.) Land abandoned by owners, whether from fear or bankruptcy, is put into production. Moneylenders' interest rates are lowered by the N.P.A. from 100 percent or more every three months to 30 or 50 percent every six months. Simple exchanges of labor and sometimes cooperatives are encouraged among the peasants, and the N.P.A. often taxes the beneficiaries of minimum land reform a percentage of the gains that result from it.

During her first year in office, President Aquino placed land reform on the back burner, arguing that it was more urgent to set up the constitutional framework for the "new democracy." On occasion she let slip deep misgivings about land reform. "By sharing out land, you only create more problems," she said barely two weeks into her presidency, "because sugar cultivation, for instance, is definitely uneconomic if carried out in small plots." This argument,

Joseph Collins, co-founder of the Institute for Food and Development Policy, has written several books on land and food issues, most recently World Hunger: Twelve Myths *(Food First/Grove Press). He has spent much of this year in the Philippines researching a new book.*

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so dear to the hearts of export-crop producers, has been debunked by respected Filipino agricultural economists and peasant organizations.

In January the massacre by Malacañang Palace guards of peasants demonstrating for reform dramatically moved the issue to the front burner. For the first time, Aquino agreed to meet with peasant organizations, and she established a Cabinet Action Committee to hold hearings and present proposals for agrarian reform decrees. The committee's first drafts drew heavily on the work done by progressives within the Department of Agrarian Reform. Whereas previous legislation had been limited to rice and corn farms, this was to be comprehensive, affecting coconut and sugar plantations, the traditional heart of economic and political power in the Philippines. The landowners lobbied fiercely against the early drafts. "We felt betrayed," Romeo Guanzon, president of the National Federation of Sugarcane Planters, complained to me. "We thought that Mrs. Aquino, a planter herself, understood that the nation's ailing sugar industry, wrecked by Marcos, desperately needs government help and not to be broken into pieces."

Landowners inundated the newspapers with articles and full-page advertisements, arguing that land reform would be disastrous for the economy. Some publicly vowed to resist it with private armies. "Not one inch of my grandfather's land will I surrender," a coconut planter in the Bicol region told me, adding that he had signed an oath in blood. A group of Negros sugar planters even threatened to secede from the republic. The besieged Cabinet Action Committee went through fourteen drafts, each more watered down than its predecessor. Then, with less than a week of decree-making power remaining, Aquino took the matter out of the committee's hands and turned it over to five lawyers, including her top aides, the controversial Joker Arroyo and Teddy Boy Locsin, none of whom had any expert knowledge of the issue. The resulting decree, issued July 22, proclaimed itself the "Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program" (CARP).

Most of the major U.S. media parroted the handouts from the presidential palace. "Aquino Puts Controversial Land Reform into Effect," announced the *Los Angeles Times*. "More Property for the Peasants Under Aquino's Land Reform" was *The Washington Post*'s headline. In fact, the CARP is the latest in a long line of ineffectual measures that litter Philippine history. Since the 1930s, land reform has been the subject of at least forty-two presidential decrees, nine legislative acts, seventeen letters of instruction and scores of memorandums, all couched in grandiose rhetoric, all lacking in substance.

Perhaps the CARP's most blatant concession to landed interests was the elimination of a provision that in early drafts had set a ceiling of seven hectares (seventeen and a half acres) on private ownership. This figure had already been criticized as too high by peasant organizations and even by the World Bank in a staff report on land reform, and it would have exempted at least two-thirds of the country's agricultural land from any redistribution. Seven hectares—which might seem low to those familiar with land tenure in Latin America—is far more than Filipino farmers typically cultivate by themselves and is generous in comparison to the three-hectare limit set by Taiwan and South Korea.

Rather than specifying this ceiling and other essential aspects of the reform herself, Aquino passed the buck to the Congress, thereby virtually precluding any meaningful action for the foreseeable future. More than 90 percent of the 200 elected members of the House of Representatives are landowners, many at the upper end of the scale. The Congress had just convened in late July when 114 members of the House lined up behind a bill, also titled "Comprehensive Agrarian Reform," specifying no less than a twenty-four hectare retention limit, which would exclude at least 88 percent of the country's agricultural land! ("God is against land reform," testified one leading member of the House Committee on Agrarian Reform, "for He gave us the commandment 'Thou shalt not steal.'")

Aquino's proviso governing compensation is also calculated to appease landowners. Expropriated owners would be paid what they consider "the current fair market value"

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Princeton University

THE CORRUPTION OF LAW AND POLICY IN THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA

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of their property. Emboldened by this proviso, the landowners' bill now before Congress would require "market value" compensation to be paid immediately and in cash. Representative Bonifacio Gillego, the pro-reform chair of the House Committee on Agrarian Reform, told me this move was patently designed to paralyze any reform by raising its costs to astronomical levels. The Aquino government has no viable source for financing high-priced land reform, and the World Bank has made it clear it has no intention of providing loans for an expensive landlord buy-out.

Dole, Del Monte and the other giant multinational agribusinesses that operate hundreds of thousands of hectares of bananas, pineapples and other crops are also likely to escape Aquino's reform through loopholes such as an exemption for "developmental considerations." Nor does the CARP threaten the largest holder of agricultural lands—the U.S. Defense Department, which occupies but leaves idle much of the roughly 169,500 acres allotted to the U.S. military bases. The decree exempts land for reasons of "national defense."

Corporate landowners enjoy one further advantage under the CARP. In lieu of land redistribution, they may offer their workers the option to purchase corporation capital stock equivalent to the value of the land. Aquino's insistence that her brothers and sisters do something about Hacienda Luisita is likely to result in such a plan, allowing their 4,500 resident employees to purchase a minority interest in the family's corporation.

In essence, Aquino would like land redistribution to be voluntary; landowners would be persuaded that selling their land to the government for redistribution could be profitable. She would compensate them so handsomely that they could buy into other areas of the economy—or California real estate—and be even better off. Such a vision is, as noted, financially out of the question; but more fundamental, it isn't agrarian reform. Genuine agrarian reform is not a mere economic arrangement but seeks to redress social injustices, especially economic and political inequalities. As such, it is a zero-sum game.

If there are any teeth in Aquino's decree, they affect the supposed beneficiaries. For one thing, recipients would be required to pay for their land—presumably the price paid to the owner by the government—in thirty equal installments at 6 percent interest. Default would result in repossession of the land by a government agency. The World Bank, which predicts a result similar to the 80 percent default rate under Marcos's Operation Land Transfer scheme, has strongly criticized the measure, arguing that it wipes out the reform's potential economic benefits. The World Bank proposed an alternative of a one-time charge of 600 pesos (about $30), which would have been acceptable to the peasant organization, but Aquino rejected it.

One of the few provisos that Aquino has not left to Congress permanently disqualifies peasants who "prematurely enter the land." This undoubtedly is intended to discredit the leftist National Peasant Movement (K.M.P.) and local peasant organizations that have promoted popular takeovers of thousands of acres of land "ill-gotten" by Marcos's cronies. K.M.P. organizers fear that this clause effectively licenses landowners and their private armies, and the military and vigilante groups to harass and evict peasant families at will.

In late May dozens of farmer and "pro-people" organizations united around a common program of agrarian reform, based on the principle of owner cultivation. By joining this coalition, the K.M.P. compromised on several longstanding demands in the faint hope that a modest but meaningful shift in agrarian reform might yet be salvaged. The K.M.P. leadership agreed, for example, that landowners should receive compensation on a sliding scale, with the higher payments per hectare going to the smaller landlords. This pragmatic pro-reform coalition has worked hard with the eight nationalist House members. Bonifacio Gillego, a nationalist, told me that he was initially able to push the progressives' bill through the House committee because "the Philippines has not only absentee landlords but also absentee committee members." But still he saw no real prospect of the bill's eventual passage.

By mid-October, desperation had replaced even these slender hopes. A previously sanguine official in the Department of Agrarian Reform confided to me that the most that could now be expected was a series of publicity gestures: a few owners voluntarily selling their lands to the government, the continuing but glacial implementation of the Marcos land reform decree to benefit a few hundred tenants on rice and corn farms, and the distributing of a few hundred hectares of the ill-gotten lands of Marcos cronies to peasants who have not occupied them.

The failure to deliver meaningful agrarian reform has set the stage for a rural catastrophe. K.M.P. leaders estimate that so far this year peasants have occupied 70,000 hectares of idle land. The only option now, they say, is to step up takeovers and put the idle lands into production. Peasants who take land reform into their own hands are likely to provoke a backlash from a restive military demanding a freer hand to go after the insurgents' mass base. The short-term result will be widespread human rights abuses, including the relocation of entire villages by force.

In September I attended a gathering of some 200 sugar cane planters in Bacolod, Negros, addressed by Romeo Guanzon and by the six other sugar cane planters who took all the island's seats in the May Congressional elections. Guanzon proudly presented the landowners' bill as a triumph of reason over madness. Two hours into the meeting and with a plane to catch, I left the hall. Straight ahead of me as I walked down the front steps, I saw hundreds of dirt-poor peasant families camped at the entrance to the provincial capitol. They had been forced out of their villages in southeastern Negros by aerial bombings. The Governor of Negros had sought to justify the bombings on the ground that the targets were "Red villages." The government knew this, he told a visiting U.S. journalist, "because in the [Congressional] elections most of the villagers voted for the popular candidates." □

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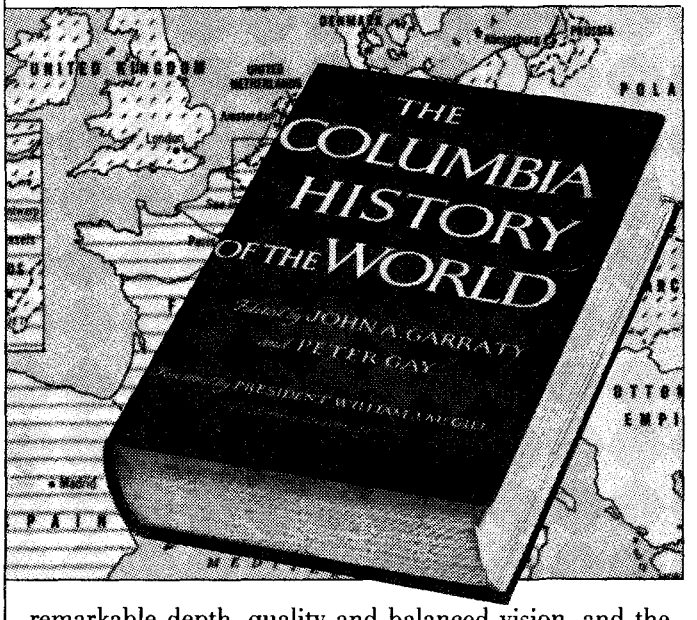

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COVER-UP AT THE V.A.

Putting Vets In the Shredder

MARK PERRY

In 1985, when the Supreme Court upheld an 1862 statute that puts a $10 limit on the amount veterans may pay lawyers for representing them in benefits cases against the Veterans Administration, it conceded that certain classes of veterans might be adversely affected by the ruling. This opening was used by the National Association of Radiation Survivors (NARS) to press a lawsuit against V.A. Administrator Thomas Turnage, alleging that nonlawyer service representatives (advisers trained to argue cases before the V.A., heavily utilized by veterans' organizations) did not argue claims for increased compensation as effectively as lawyers and that they failed to collect, let alone understand, medical and other technical evidence necessary to prove the claims of servicemen who were exposed to atomic radiation.

In Federal District Court in San Francisco in early May 1986, Judge Marilyn Hall Patel told NARS attorney Gordon Erspamer that he could proceed with requests for V.A. records showing how the agency handles radiation-based benefits claims. The ruling caused a minor hubbub at the Veterans Administration, which claimed the NARS suit would cost the government millions of dollars. Erspamer, a lawyer with the San Francisco firm of Morrison and Foerster (which had taken the case on a *pro bono* basis), fired back at the V.A. in late May during hearings on the NARS claim before the House Veterans Affairs Committee. Erspamer told the committee the V.A. wasn't as concerned about the cost of the suit as it was with potential embarrassment that would result from meeting his discovery requests. Erspamer went further, telling the committee and members of the press that he thought the V.A. "obviously has something to hide."

Within a week of his testimony, the lawyer received confirmation of his allegations in a letter from an anonymous V.A. official. "Your statement before the House Veterans Affairs Committee on May 20, 1986, was accurate and true," the official, who was perhaps inevitably dubbed "Deep Throat" by Erspamer, wrote. "The Veterans Administration does not systematically provide veterans with adequate due process." The letter went on to outline the kinds of discovery requests Erspamer should make to receive evidence that the V.A. disallows benefits claims in order to "statistically enhance the data that measures the timeliness of [veterans'] claims processing."

According to V.A. employees, the Deep Throat letter in May touched off a "major explosion in the agency." In June, just weeks after Erspamer received the letter, V.A. officials began a systematic destruction of the documents requested by NARS in its lawsuit, according to V.A. sources.

Allegations that V.A. officials were destroying documents to cover up embarrassing policies spurred Erspamer to lash out at the agency during a June 1986 interview with this reporter: "It's clear that the V.A. routinely loses veterans' records. The fact of the matter is that it's chaos over there. No wonder they're embarrassed. They don't answer letters, they don't inform veterans of their rights—they're looking for excuses to ignore veterans' needs. They just don't want that to come out."

The Deep Throat allegations, Erspamer discovered, had a basis in decades of V.A. policies that allow claims adjudicators to reject a petition for benefits for the slimmest of reasons. In effect, the V.A. rewards its adjudicators according to the number of claims they process, evaluating their performance according to "end product codes." The more claims an adjudicator processes, the more end product codes he or she accumulates. Since it takes a shorter time to kill a claim than approve it, the tendency to reject claims for lack of information is reinforced.

Soon after Erspamer's appearance on Capitol Hill, NARS attorneys began another round of discovery requests for agency documents. That touched off another letter from the anonymous V.A. employee: "Your interrogatories recently sent to the Veterans Administration have been received," the insider wrote on July 11. "You are headed in the right direction. However, there is a conspiracy by the supervisors of the Field Operations Staff in the Compensation and Pension Service to deny you the information requested. If you do not specifically name the correct form or record, they intend to indicate they have no record."

Erspamer was stunned. Not only were V.A. employees destroying documents, they were impeding a Federal court case. If that could be proved, top officials could be indicted for obstruction of justice or contempt of court, or both. Also, in July, according to Justice Department officials, the department's criminal division assigned two new lawyers to the team of five already formed to defend the V.A.

The second Deep Throat letter had more serious consequences than the first. According to V.A. employees, agency officials went on a witch hunt in an attempt to identify the author of the letters. Several employees claimed they were threatened with reprisals by agency officers. One employee, V.A. lawyer Ronald Abrams, arrived at work and was handed a drawing of a Star of David with a swastika inside it. Abrams claimed he was targeted by higher-ups who believed he was "an agency mole," probably because he had warned the V.A. top echelon that the agency was vulnerable to claims of systematically denying veterans due process.

Abrams was clearly frightened and made a private call to Judge Patel to complain of the harassment. Erspamer and Ted Hirt, a lawyer for the Justice Department, joined the

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Mark Perry, a Washington, D.C., reporter, won a citation from Project Censored for his reporting on the V.A. scandal. His book, Four Stars: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the American Military, *will be published by Houghton Mifflin in fall 1988.*

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conversation in a conference call. Abrams told Patel that V.A. officials were telling other employees, "I am the cause of these problems. I'm Deep Throat." Patel reacted swiftly, telling Hirt to inform V.A. officers that any threats against employees called to testify in the lawsuit "could constitute criminal conduct."

In an interview with this reporter, Abrams confirmed Erspamer's claim that the V.A. was destroying evidence required in the lawsuit, perhaps hundreds of thousands of pages of documents showing malfeasance in handling veterans' claims. According to Abrams, "The V.A. shredder was working overtime." Abrams's former boss, Michael Dunlap, later told a special House and Senate joint committee hearing on the scandal that the document destruction was "a routine purge of V.A. files."

The V.A.'s claim was almost laughable, or, as Judge Patel put it, "inherently incredible." Not only were the documents that were destroyed valuable to the NARS case, it was the first time the agency had conducted a "routine purge" of its files in over a decade, though some employees said that a similar purge had taken place in 1982. Patel wasn't the only one who didn't take Dunlap's S.O.P. defense seriously. "The destruction [of documents] was across the board," a V.A. official told me during an interview earlier this year. "As far as I'm concerned, they went after everything in sight."

Last January 8, in an unprecedented move, Patel slapped the V.A. with a fine of $120,000 and appointed a "special master" to oversee compliance with Erspamer's discovery requests. Patel implied that V.A. officials might also be vulnerable to charges of perjury as a result of sworn depositions that Erspamer's request for records on radiation claims could not be complied with because it would mean going through 35 million different sets of records. Patel apparently believed the V.A. was stonewalling and told it to pay the costs of the court-appointed monitor.

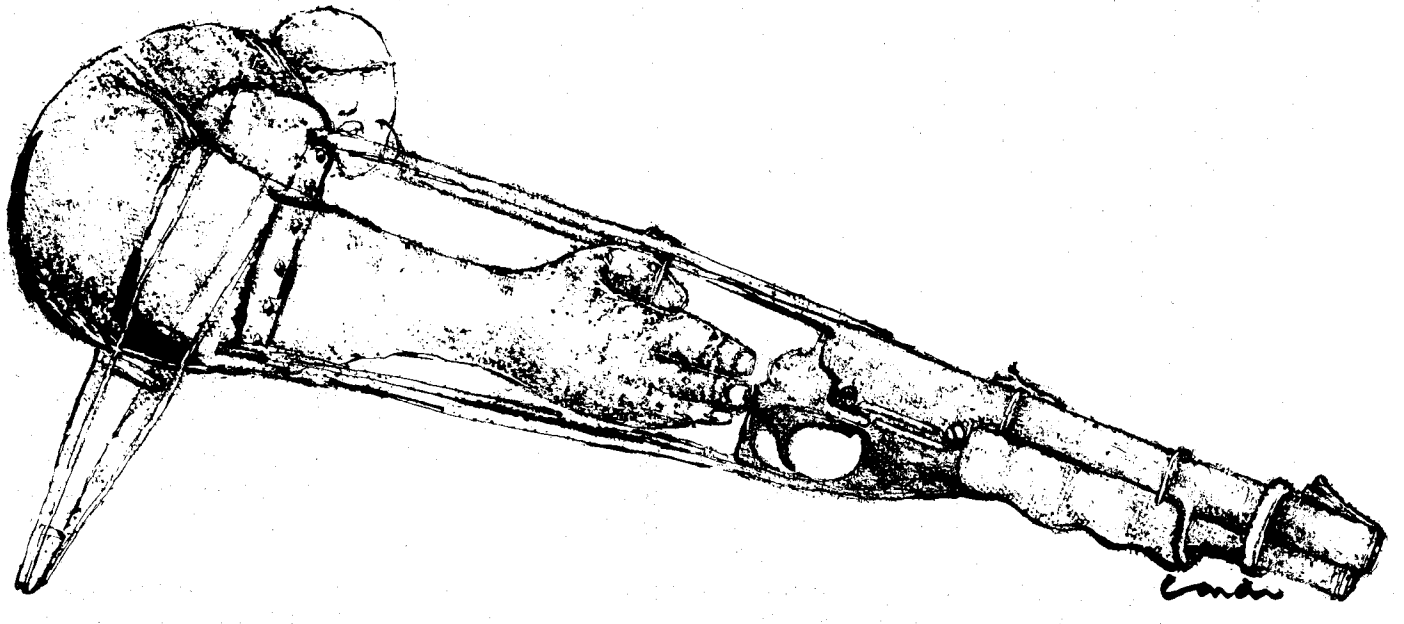
According to one Justice Department official, Attorney General Edwin Meese 3d directed lawyers in the civil division to take over primary responsibility for defending the V.A. "We couldn't believe how stupid the agency had acted," the source said. "You don't have to be a lawyer to figure out that you shouldn't go out and destroy documents."

Within weeks of Patel's fine, the number of Justice Department lawyers working on the case had increased from seven to eleven, and by midsummer, a total of eighteen lawyers were assigned to the case. When the trial began on September 8, twenty-two government lawyers were assigned to the case, and defending the V.A. against the lawsuit and charges of cover-up had consumed $2.5 million. (The Justice Department lawyers would not comment on the case, citing departmental rules and "longstanding legal traditions" barring lawyers from commenting on cases until they have been decided.)

On Capitol Hill, defenders of the agency attempted to head off damage caused by the NARS revelations. The V.A.'s chief proponent, Mississippi Representative G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery, chair of the Veterans Affairs Committee, had to be badgered into holding hearings on the growing scandal, and when they finally opened in March he attacked NARS lawyer Erspamer for having "a chip on his shoulder." Apparently, Montgomery was unaware of the truth of his statement—Erspamer's father died of leukemia, in all likelihood caused by exposure to atmospheric atomic tests conducted in Nevada.

Last February Representative Don Edwards ordered the General Accounting Office to launch an investigation of the V.A.'s inability to comply with court requests. But the most surprising revelation came from V.A. officials, who acknowledged that all radiation claims had been computerized in 1982, so that they did not have to search 35 million files after all.

Even so, members of Congress were fearful that concerns over the V.A.'s actions would die down in the months prior to the opening of the NARS trial in early September. While the Congressional hearings had brought V.A. practices into public view, the burgeoning scandal had yet to make front-page news—a fact that Representative Lane Evans, for one, believed was necessary to spur "a top-to-bottom overhaul"



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of the agency. Evans and a number of House and Senate colleagues, including Representative James Florio and Senator Alan Cranston, hoped that the NARS revelations would speed passage of legislation granting veterans the right to take the V.A. to court over benefits claims—a bill that had been stopped dead by Sonny Montgomery in five straight Congressional sessions.

Evans need not have worried. Over the past six months, the V.A. has been hit by two government reports and a new scandal. In May 1987 the G.A.O. released an audit of nine V.A. hospitals (out of seventy-two) that criticized the agency for "systematically failing to investigate" patient injuries, surgical complications and unexpected deaths in those facilities. In one case, V.A. medical personnel put a critically ill patient in a cab for a 300-mile trip to receive radiation treatment. He arrived dead. Those involved failed to conduct an autopsy to find the cause of death, saying the patient died of lung cancer. G.A.O. investigators noted that the V.A. failed to engage in routine medical investigations in 86 percent of all cases.

Soon after the release of the G.A.O. report, the House Committee on Government Operations published its own, "Patients at Risk: A Study of Deficiencies in the Veterans Administration Medical Quality Assurance Program." This report found that V.A. hospitals were riddled with "preventable errors," particularly in cardiac care units. The report gave some horrifying examples: At the Memphis V.A. Medical Center a doctor killed a patient by accidentally cutting a hole in his left ventricle. Nor was that case without parallel. According to the report, mortality rates are twice the national average in V.A. medical centers in Indianapolis; Iowa City; Lexington, Kentucky; Nashville; San Diego; and Washington.

The report went on to note problems in other areas, paying special attention to one case (apparently typical) of a mental patient who sued the V.A. after fifteen years of careless treatment. Judge Patel summarized what a number of health care officials have been saying privately about the quality of care by the agency: "If this case were a fictional scenario, the author would have to have been Franz Kafka. [The patient] was buffeted by a blind bureaucracy which provided more torture than treatment."

But the worst was yet to come. As the NARS lawsuit against the V.A. went to trial, a V.A. employee leaked a medical report the agency had not intended to publish on the impact of Agent Orange on Vietnam veterans. According to a source in the V.A., the report had been suppressed "at the highest levels" of the agency since February of this year. The report shows an "unexplained excess of deaths" from non-Hodgkins lymphoma, a rare form of cancer, "among marines who served in Vietnam." Specifically, the study showed that marines who served in Vietnam had a 58 percent higher rate of lung cancer than would be expected and a 110 percent higher rate of non-Hodgkins lymphomas. The report's findings came after nearly eight years of official denial that the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam had caused any increased incidence of cancer.

"This is the strangest thing I've ever seen," Representative Edwards says. "It's the first government report I've read that doesn't have a date on it." Evans added, "I'd like to know what other reports the V.A. is hiding. This is just one report; there are probably a few more."

In fact, there are at least nine. According to court documents recently leaked to reporters, the V.A. has prepared at least six medical studies of veterans without making them public. They include a report on the impact of other chemical agents on veterans, as well as case-control studies of the incidence of soft-tissue sarcomas among those who served in Vietnam. The nine reports were obtained through litigation against the V.A. by Vietnam veterans in California. The agency had objected to turning over the secret reports to plaintiffs during the discovery process (by now a well-worn V.A. legal tactic) because, in the words of its doctors, "Premature disclosure may preclude the ability of the scientists involved from obtaining publication, since some publishers will not publish studies that have already been publicly disseminated."

Coupled with the NARS suit, the publication of investigative reports by the G.A.O., the House Committee on Government Operations and the leaked V.A. study on Agent Orange has made the Veterans Administration the most embattled agency in Washington. For the V.A.'s defenders, the newest revelations mean that the spreading scandal will probably not be brought under control until a new V.A. administrator is named. Even more serious, the NARS lawsuit threatens to undermine the alliance among V.A. backers and the veterans' organizations that provide millions of dollars in campaign contributions to those who defend the agency against all critics.

The Justice Department is still scrambling to contain the scandal. According to Justice Department lawyers working in the department's antitrust division, "The people over there [in the civil division] are going wild" over the NARS lawsuit. Apparently, they fear that responsibility for the destruction of V.A. files rests in the upper reaches of the agency, or beyond. Even Attorney General Meese, these sources say, is watching the case closely, perhaps in the knowledge that the burgeoning V.A. scandal could do to Ronald Reagan's domestic policy what retired Maj. Gen. Richard Secord and his Iran/*contra* affair friends did to his foreign policy. □

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Muckraker

(*Continued From Front Cover*)
people on the far-right end of the political spectrum—including a right-wing activist and publisher, a former C.I.A. official and Reagan campaign aide and a conservative corporate tycoon—as well as a White House–created nonprofit group. These relationships prompt questions about potential conflicts of interest or, at the very least, Anderson's judgment. Several former staff reporters for Anderson, who would talk only if granted anonymity, said they were often troubled by the organizations and individuals with whom he has made common cause. Some also pointed to what they consider a disturbing trend in the column: Although sharply critical of Administration officials and policies, Anderson has, in the words of one former reporter, "gone soft on Ronald Reagan."

Anderson's pattern of dubious alliances goes back at least to 1976, when the nation's most widely read columnist—the "Washington Merry-Go-Round" appears in 850 newspapers—made headlines for being involved with the Diplomat National Bank. The reporter who won a Pulitzer Prize for revealing the Nixon White House's tilt toward Pakistan in 1972 and obtained transcripts of the Watergate grand jury proceedings was suckered into becoming an official of a bank owned by the shady lobbyist Tong Sun Park, a Korean Central Intelligence Agency operative and associate of evangelist Sun Myung Moon.

Apparently, the negative publicity that incident generated failed to convince Anderson that an independent muckraking journalist should avoid unseemly entanglements. Take his relationship with investment newsletter magnate Howard Ruff, whose company, Target Inc., recently purchased Anderson's twice-monthly newsletter, "Jack Anderson Confidential."

This summer, while talks were going on between the previous owner of the newsletter and Target, an intern for Anderson named Michael Rosenfelt was looking into a legal defense fund set up for retired Maj. Gen. John Singlaub, a supplier of arms to the *contras*. Rosenfelt discovered that the fund was managed by Neal Blair, a conservative activist who is under investigation by the Internal Revenue Service. Blair's solicitation and handling of money for Singlaub seemed a promising lead for an Anderson column. But Blair had also been director of two organizations founded by Ruff: Free the Eagle, a conservative lobbying group, and a political action committee called RuffPAC.

Following the lead, Rosenfelt met with Andrew Eiva, head of the Federation for American Afghan Action, which had received support from Free the Eagle. Not long after Rosenfelt's visit, according to Eiva, Van Atta called Eiva and told him that the story was canceled because "there was some business deal pending that would look awkward." Did Van Atta pull Rosenfelt off the story because the deal to sell Anderson's newsletter was in the works? Van Atta told me that the discussions with Target "had something to do with" his spiking the story. Investigating a close associate of someone with whom you are negotiating creates a "difficult legal situation," he said, and might appear to be a strong-arm tactic.

But Van Atta added that he thought Rosenfelt was investigating accusations of misappropriation of funds that Eiva and former Free the Eagle employees had leveled against Blair and Ruff. In early spring, before the talks with Target began, Eiva had proposed the same story to Van Atta, who turned it down. Asked about any connection between the Ruff negotiations and Rosenfelt's story, Anderson scoffed, "That's impossible." He said he concurred with Van Atta's opinion and that he too believed the article in question focused only on Eiva's charges. Rosenfelt declined to talk about how the story was handled.

Even if Van Atta and Anderson's version is true, the question remains: Is Ruff an appropriate publisher for America's best-known investigative reporter? Ruff, a colorful figure, wrote the 1978 best-seller *How To Prosper During the Coming Bad Years*, a doom-and-gloom investor's guide. Then he founded his own newsletter, now called "The Ruff Times," a weekly advisory on what stocks, bonds and metals to buy or sell. His investment tips are served up with doses of political conservatism. Last month, for example, Ruff blasted the "deviant groups" that opposed Judge Robert Bork's nomination to the Supreme Court and warned that if the Democrats win the White House, financial disaster will follow. In 1986, *USA Today* dubbed him the "Pat Robertson of the financial-advisory letter set."

Ruff set up Free the Eagle and RuffPAC in 1980. Under the direction of Neal Blair, whom Ruff called "my chief political strategist," Free the Eagle, which claims 250,000 members, has lobbied for *contra* aid and U.S. assistance to Renamo guerrillas in Mozambique and Jonas Savimbi's Unita in Angola. Of the 4,761 PACs registered with the Federal Election Committee, RuffPAC, which supports mainly conservative Republican candidates, ranked forty-fifth in contributions in 1985 and 1986, receiving more than $1.5 million.

Not only is the I.R.S. investigating Blair, it also is reportedly examining Free the Eagle, and the F.E.C. is probing RuffPAC. Ruff would not say what, specifically, interests the F.E.C. but commented, "I would not be surprised if they find some minor violations." Ruff dismissed the allegation of misappropriated Free the Eagle and RuffPAC funds as the complaints of disgruntled former employees.

Anderson strongly denied that his connection with Ruff has had any impact on his editorial independence. After AdTest Lab, the previous owner of his newsletter, put it up for sale, he said, "I visited with three bidders and approved all three. . . . My attorney recommended the contract submitted by Target. . . . AdTest and Target then conducted lengthy negotiations, which ended in the sale of my newsletter to Target." Anderson asserted he was not aware that Ruff, whom he has known for several years, was chair of Target. "I have never had a single discussion with him about the newsletter," Anderson said. Ruff remarked that he has no interest in influencing Anderson's copy, nor does he think he could do so.

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Anderson insisted that Ruff's political and financial dealings are no more concern of his than are those of the publishers of the newspapers that carry his column. "I write a newspaper column that's published in conservative and liberal papers across the country. There may be some publishers who are thieves and run the column. . . . But it's my column and I am not responsible for what my editors and publishers do."

The same holds true for a business partner who worked for the C.I.A. and Reagan. For several years, Anderson has collaborated on producing television documentaries with Max Hugel, a 1980 campaign aide for Ronald Reagan who resigned his post as C.I.A. chief of clandestine operations the following year, after allegations by two business associates that he was engaged in improper stock trading. This past year, as chair of Project 88: Americans for the Reagan Agenda, Hugel hosted a gala fund-raiser in honor of the late William Casey.

With Hugel's company, International Syndications Inc., Anderson co-produced a documentary on Rajiv Gandhi, aired on the Public Broadcasting System in 1986. The Drew Pearson Foundation, which is based in Anderson's office and headed by his personal secretary, handled $100,000 in financing for the film. Although the foundation was listed in the film's credits, the actual source of the money, according to Anderson, was a private firm, which he would not name, that conducts business in Pakistan and did not want to be identified with the film. "They were afraid this would damage their ability to do business in Pakistan," he said. "They wanted to be helpful to India without damaging relations with Pakistan." Anderson, then, facilitated the efforts of this company to court the Indian government's favor by accepting its money for his journalistic endeavor.

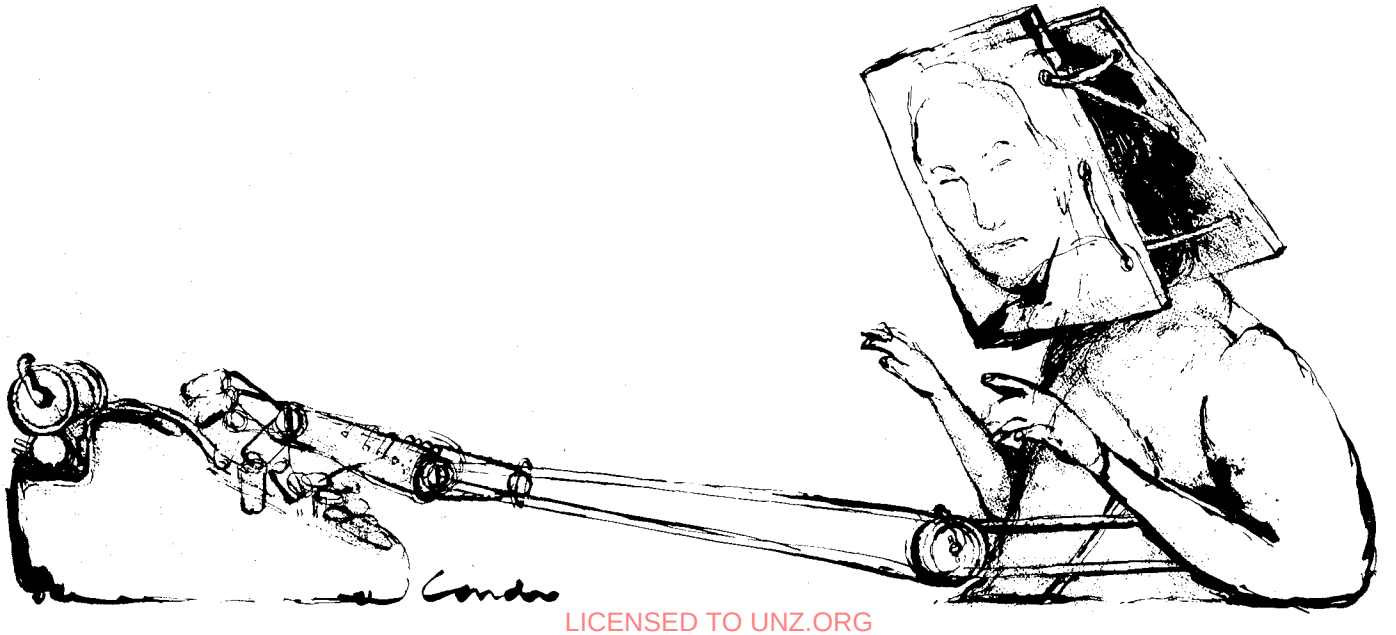
Anderson and Hugel are currently working on several projects, including a $4.2 million Home Box Office docudrama about a Navy whistleblower, according to Hugel. Should a reporter who covers the White House, politics and the intelligence community collaborate with an ex-C.I.A. official and former Reagan campaign staffer? "These deals have nothing to do with our backgrounds," Hugel said. "I thought it was a good business proposition to invest in Jack Anderson." Before negotiating with Hugel, Anderson assigned a reporter from his staff to investigate Hugel. The reporter concluded that Hugel "had been framed by the C.I.A. establishment" but remained a "pillar of conservative society," Anderson said. His contracts with Hugel, he added, grant him "absolute editorial control."

But, as a former column staffer said of the company Anderson keeps, "The problem with Max Hugel is the same with anyone extremely controversial and political—the same problem with Ruff. Jack just doesn't see it."

Anderson has also struck up a partnership with the conservative J. Peter Grace, chair of W.R. Grace, to further a cause close to Anderson's heart: battling government waste. In 1984, after the President's Private Sector Survey on Cost Control, better known as the Grace commission, released 2,478 recommendations on how to cut Federal spending, Anderson and Grace formed Citizens Against Government Waste to lobby for the commission's proposals.

Fighting waste is not a conservative cause, Anderson said, and he noted that the board of Citizens Against Government Waste includes both Republicans and Democrats. But the Grace commission was not ideologically neutral. A report issued by the General Accounting Office concluded that "policy-oriented issues make up a large portion of the Commission's total estimated savings." Nearly 20 percent of those proposed savings, the G.A.O. said, was attributable to restructuring Federal subsidy programs and limiting Federal health care expenditures, both of which involve political decisions rather than mere changes in management practices.

"Jack doesn't need J. Peter Grace to wage a war on waste," one ex-Anderson staffer exclaimed. "He's been doing it in the column for twenty years. If Jack wants to plug a program, that's fine, but that shouldn't evolve into a partnership." To Anderson, it's a matter of getting results. Citing an Office of Management and Budget study, he maintained that the work of the Grace commission and Citizens



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Against Government Waste has led to $70 billion in savings for the taxpayer. But James Blum, assistant director of the budget analysis division of the Congressional Budget Office, suggested that one should "take numbers like that with a grain of salt"; there is no sound method of calculating the amount the government does not spend, or who deserves credit for the restraint.

Another of Anderson's extracurricular activities is chairing the Young Astronaut Council, a nonprofit group that uses the space program to promote student interest in science and mathematics in elementary and junior high schools. Anderson conceived of the program and proposed it to Reagan during a visit with the President. On October 17, 1984, it was launched by the White House Office of Private Sector Initiatives; it is supported by corporations including Martin Marietta and Rockwell International. Anderson estimated that he gives 25 percent of his time to Young Astronaut, without any pay.

"Jack was very excited about Young Astronaut," a former Anderson staffer recalled. "It got him into the White House." It also got two of his children employment. Tanya Neider, Anderson's daughter, worked there last year until she resigned to raise a family, and Marketing Enterprises, a consulting firm owned by Anderson's son Randy, is under contract with Young Astronaut to find corporations to promote the program. Anderson said he recruited his children as volunteers during the group's early days, and executive director Wendell Butler then hired them. "When I learned he had retained two of my children, I warned this might be misinterpreted and cautioned him against it," Anderson maintained. "He insisted they had the skills he needed."

Anderson occasionally promotes Citizens Against Government Waste and the Young Astronaut Council in "Washington Merry-Go-Round." He has praised Reagan for establishing this council—while not noting his own involvement with the project. Anderson, of course, may use his column to boost what he considers to be worthy groups. But have his affiliations with Grace and Young Astronaut affected his coverage of certain related subjects?

Some past Anderson associates questioned whether Anderson's relationship with Grace might prevent his reporters from working on stories involving the tycoon or his company, which has been implicated in a number of environmental controversies and criticized for not paying taxes. But only one could point to a specific example. John Dillon, a reporter for Anderson from 1981 to 1984, recalled that a source once tried to leak him a memorandum showing that J. Peter Grace was planning to aid the internal Nicaraguan opposition to the Sandinistas. Dillon said he told his source "Jack and Grace were talking about anti-government waste and this would be touchy." His source also wanted the story out right away—a condition Dillon could not meet due to the column's seven-day lead time. Dillon passed. Asked about this incident, Anderson replied, "I didn't know about that. You're telling me he had some mental reservations that he never expressed to me."

Nevertheless, several reporters who have worked for Anderson observed that his outside projects, which are well known to his staff, breed self-censorship. "I learned not to take on NASA stories," one said. "It's not that Jack says, 'Don't do NASA.' But we knew. And Jack in his time was extremely critical of NASA." Anderson denied he has let NASA off the hook: "I have taken NASA on. . . . NASA has nothing to do with Young Astronaut." But he has published some extremely bullish columns on the space program. On April 1, 1986, in the aftermath of the Challenger space shuttle disaster, the muckraker chided the press corps for being overly aggressive in its examination of the tragedy. Such scrutiny, he wrote, "has demoralized NASA and bogged down the U.S. space program."

Anderson's relations with the White House–created Young Astronaut Council and the private-sector branch of the presidentially appointed Grace commission seem to violate his own code. In his book *Confessions of a Muckraker*, Anderson wrote, "alienation . . . must ever be the rule between muckrakers and Presidents." He had seen his mentor, Drew Pearson, who originated the column, play hardball with Presidents. Nevertheless, Pearson, according to his biographer Oliver Pilat, eventually fell prey to the charms of Lyndon Johnson, defending him in print in return for what he believed to be leverage at the White House.

Several Anderson alumni with whom I spoke noted the Pearson-Johnson relationship in seeking to explain Anderson's coverage of Reagan. "There has not been a critical column of Reagan since he's been in power," one remarked. "It's been an extremely disturbing trend for people in the office." But Les Whitten, who has worked with Anderson since 1969, said, "I can't imagine Jack softening any story on Reagan."

A review of more than 500 "Washington Merry-Go-Round" columns written since January 1, 1986, does reveal a proclivity to coddle Reagan. A March 19, 1986, effort, based on an interview Reagan granted Van Atta, reported that the President misses "the simple pleasures" of life, such as driving. In another, Anderson and Van Atta previewed former budget director David Stockman's book and defended Reagan: "He will be portrayed as less than bright—an unfair characterization according to those who work directly with Reagan." In an Easter Sunday column in 1986, Anderson and Van Atta presented Reagan's recollection of four religious moments he has experienced as President. On another occasion, the two elicited Reagan's thoughts about the Founding Fathers.

When it comes to White House screw-ups, Anderson finds fault with the aides, not the star. A November 24, 1986, column castigated Donald Regan, then chief of staff, for providing his boss with yes-or-no choices on key decisions rather than policy alternatives. Reagan's acceptance of government by checkmark was not criticized. A February 11, 1987, column attacked the hypocrisy of "Reagan proconsuls" for portraying the President as tough on terrorism while "secretly sidling up" to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Anderson also has used his column to blame Con-

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gress, rather than President Reagan, for "pushing the public debt relentlessly up, up, up."

Why the soft touch with Reagan, especially from a journalist who made Nixon's enemies list and routinely savaged Carter? "He happens to like the man," observed Joseph Spear, who functions as the column's managing editor. Anderson himself speaks of Reagan in complimentary terms. "I do think more highly of him than I do of Jimmy Carter," he said. Though he complained the Reagan Administration is "closemouthed, tight-lipped and secretive," Anderson said he has always found Reagan to be "open and candid." Anderson asserted there is no ideological component to his feelings toward Reagan, but one former reporter observed, "Reagan's world view comes close to Jack's."

Anderson describes himself as a liberal. If so, he is a cold war liberal of an odd sort. At a speech he gave to a 1982 conference of student journalists, Anderson criticized a majority of the press for having "a schoolboy's crush on . . . Communist revolutionaries." Of the Sandinista leadership, for instance, he said, "They're not Nicaraguans—though I guess they are by nationality. They're Soviet agents. They work for a foreign power." He called them "disciplined and trained graduates of Moscow terrorist schools." He went on to reveal that Soviet-backed "radicals and revolutionaries" are "coming into our midst . . . and seizing upon legitimate grievances for the purposes of undermining and destabilizing the United States." Asked recently to whom he was referring, Anderson replied he did not recall but was probably warning that tyranny can happen even here. But he has pushed for joint U.S.-Soviet projects. Last month he announced a monthly column exchange with Soviet commentator Vladimir Posner, an articulate spokesman who has infuriated the Administration.

Ideology may not explain Anderson's hands-off approach to Reagan or his extracurricular endeavors. "Jack has been an outsider for over thirty years," said one former associate. "He had no friends in politics and journalism. He kept to himself and his family. That gets tiresome, you want to be accepted. He's been an outsider for so long that when he decided he wanted some establishment friendships, they were not ones in his best interest. It doesn't occur to him that he's Caesar's wife, to watch for conflicts of interest he would blast someone else for." Anderson, another reporter who worked for him commented, "has never been treated well by the power structure. He wanted to be treated like one of them. Reagan's people have been smart enough to recognize his susceptibility" by granting Anderson more White House access and supporting his pet projects.

Anderson, now 65 years old, remarked he has "fewer friends in the government than any major correspondent. I think it can affect your coverage." But he refused to recognize that the Caesar's-wife precept requires him to be cleaner than clean, and that it covers his business associates and nonjournalistic endeavors as well.

The "Washington Merry-Go-Round," the nation's longest-running column, is an institution. By Spear's count, it has "graduated" 300 reporters who now can be found throughout the media. Anderson takes no income from the column or the television and radio contracts it generates; the money from those sources is ploughed back into the column. "My lecture fees have been sufficient to provide for my needs," he said. (His earnings from that source have been estimated at $250,000 a year.)

The column will continue past Anderson. Several reporters who have recently worked for him said that Van Atta, who has been anointed as Anderson's heir, and Spear are gradually gaining more control of the column. They have their work cut out for them. A few years ago, Anderson's shop was staffed by about ten reporters and five interns. Today, however, because of the loss of some lucrative television and radio contracts and rising legal costs, it functions with only two or three reporters and four interns.

Despite the reduced staff, the column scores more hits than misses. But it is disappointing that Anderson has fallen in with people like Ruff and Grace and has been easy on a President like Ronald Reagan, whose Administration has produced more than its share of corruption and whose policies have often given comfort to the very "imperialists, militarists, monopolists, racists" that Anderson has dedicated himself to fighting. Fans of the column, which has played a unique role in American journalism, have to hope that when Van Atta succeeds Anderson he will make the "Washington Merry-Go-Round" again a column to be feared by Presidents and resist any temptation to become involved with characters who are more fitting as targets than partners. □

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Taping the Source

JEFFERSON MORLEY

VEIL: The Secret Wars of the CIA 1981-1987. *By Bob Woodward. Simon and Schuster. 543 pp. $21.95.*

"Holy shit" is Bob Woodward's Holy Grail. The most famous newspaper reporter in America has often said that he hopes readers will blurt out those two words of rapt and profane amazement when reading his stories. But *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA, 1981-1987* is not a "holy shit" book. Woodward's portrait of the late Director of Central Intelligence William Casey and the secret wars in question elicits little surprise and less alarm. The Hollywood-style climax in which the muckraker grills the master spook on his deathbed seems ill thought-out. (If Citizen Casey had muttered "Rosebud" instead of "I believed," Woodward might have had a movie deal.) His reporting is prodigious and the covert foreign policies of the Reagan Administration are startling. Yet the overall effect of *Veil* is humdrum.

As a read, *Veil* isn't bad. Woodward narrates the Casey saga in serviceable, even energetic prose. He struts his muckraking stuff by adding an abundance of revelations—intriguing, overlooked and irrelevant alike. Woodward's scoop that Casey ordered a car bombing in Lebanon that killed eighty bystanders would have had more impact if it had been published before the Iran/*contra* Congressional hearings, but it is eye-opening nonetheless. Woodward's report that President José Napoleón Duarte of El Salvador has been a C.I.A. "asset" of some kind since 1980 has not received the attention it deserves. And readers who have been wondering where Mike Deaver's daughter went to high school should turn straight to page 183.

Woodward frames his story according to the well-established conventions of Washington journalism and of investigative reporting. He assumes that his story originates in a well-known Washington personality (Casey) and he searches single-mindedly for smoking guns (e.g., the deathbed interview). All the while, he clings to the ideal of "objective reporting." While superficially making *Veil* more believable, accessible and dramatic, these decisions also doom the book to fifteen minutes of forgettable fame atop the best-seller lists.

Woodward has not so much misreported his story as misinterpreted it. By focusing on the power struggles between Casey and a few other top officials, he tends to neglect the more fundamental and important news. Apart from his interesting descriptions of U.S. intelligence gathering on the Soviet bloc, Woodward spends little time explaining the role that the C.I.A. plays in the larger national security bureaucracy. For example, he piles up the details about Casey and Reagan's efforts to kill Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi, but has little original material about the C.I.A.'s extensive role in the secret *contra* war run by the White House. Because there was not much dispute among Woodward's high-level sources about routine C.I.A. support for *contra* operations, he had no controversy to report on. No high-level controversy, no story.

Relentlessly pursuing individual wrongdoing within the bureaucracy, Woodward has little time or inclination to explore collective wrongdoing. After all, the charm of bureaucracy for high-level officials is that it diffuses responsibility. Scott Armstrong, who co-authored *The Brethren* with Woodward and now directs the National Security Archive, says, "The problem with Woodward's approach is that he never tells you the context, what is normal." The aphorism of another Washington journalist, Michael Kinsley, is apt: "The scandal in Washington isn't what's illegal; the scandal is what is legal." Woodward's ambition to expose the illegal and abnormal might have actually reassured Casey that this reporter would not write the more provocative story of what is legal and normal for the C.I.A. Which helps answer the oft-asked question, Why would William Casey talk to Bob Woodward?

If anything, Woodward should have been more cautious about talking to Casey than vice versa. If personality is considered the key to politics, then access is considered the key to journalism. Woodward probably has more access to top government officials than any other Washington reporter. (I would bet Mike Deaver discussed more than secondary education with Woodward.) But access always—always—has a price. *Veil* confirms that the more access a reporter has, the higher price he or she pays.

Casey, in fact, obtained at least three enormous benefits from schmoozing as often as possible with *The Washington Post*'s top reporter. As Murray Kempton recently observed in *Newsday*, Woodward served as a useful conduit for offensive leaks from the C.I.A., that is, leaks designed to make the agency (and Casey) look good. Woodward's clip file contains at least eight such stories, including a piece about C.I.A. submarine-detection capabilities that could have been written by Casey himself. Such stories are arguably part of a newspaper reporter's job. But Casey's talkativeness also conveniently distracted Woodward from doing other, more important, stories. This was no small advantage for the Reagan Administration from 1984 to 1986, when the Iran/*contra* machinations were going on right under the noses of the *Post*'s editors.

In a recent *Washingtonian* article, Woodward recalls Len Downie, the managing editor of the *Post*, prowling the newsroom in 1984 and 1985, muttering in frustration. "This [the White House's private *contra* aid network] really, really stinks," Downie said, trying to get *Post* reporters, including Woodward, to follow up on the story that would become the Watergate of the 1980s. Woodward responded, "I was busy with the Casey book." Woodward's access, his high-level sources, hurt *The Washington Post*'s coverage of the scandal of the decade.

Most important, Casey shaped Woodward's understanding of the C.I.A. and its activities in the 1980s. This is not to say that Casey tricked Woodward or that Woodward made some kind of unholy bargain with the C.I.A. director. Casey merely influenced Woodward in the way that all sources influence all reporters. Edward J. Epstein observed in an article for *Commentary* in 1974 that investigative reporters are almost entirely dependent on self-interested "sources" for the version of reality they report. Thus journalists face a fundamental dilemma: They can "either serve as faithful messengers for some subterranean interest, or they can recast

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the message into their own version of the story." Journalists might try to present the "full context and circumstances surrounding the disclosure" of self-interested sources, but Epstein expressed doubts they could ever succeed.

Woodward doesn't even try. He never speculates about why Casey and other top officials were talking to him. He doesn't attempt to take into account why various "subterranean interests" within the Reagan Administration were doling out juicy tidbits to him. Unwilling to understand why he was receiving information, Woodward is unable to understand fully what he was learning. He did not recast his information; therefore he serves as the faithful messenger of his sources, including Casey.

Nothing in *Veil* illustrates the point so much as Woodward's reporting on the C.I.A.'s role in El Salvador. He has a sensational story here and he doesn't even realize it. This isn't the only example of Woodward's inadequate development of his own admirable reporting in *Veil* but it is one obvious case study of the book's pervasive flaw. By accurately presenting all the inside information precisely as Casey and other high-level sources gave it to him, Woodward here and elsewhere thoroughly obscures the reality of the manner in which the C.I.A. functions.

The El Salvador story is scattered throughout the book. On page 117, Woodward reports that in March 1981 Casey proposed, and President Reagan approved, covert "propaganda and political support" to the embattled military regime of El Salvador. Had Woodward been less fascinated by the personalities at the top and more concerned with the functioning of the bureaucracy below, he might have gone on to explain what Reagan's decision meant in the streets of San Salvador.

Woodward does know the exact nature of such C.I.A. assistance. He reports (but not until page 308) that the International Activities division of the C.I.A., with assistance from the Office of Technical Service, dispatched teams of three or four agents to friendly regimes facing political turmoil. "These programs were not designed to change a regime; quite the opposite, they were to preserve the regime," he says.

Woodward also knows the methods that the Salvadoran military was using from 1980 to 1982 to preserve the regime's power: It was killing up to 800 civilians a month in an effort to quell a widespread popular rebellion. Woodward notes that the C.I.A. was paying one of the most powerful Salvadoran officers, Nicolás Carranza, a stipend of $90,000 a year. He adds that "it was the intelligence section of Carranza's Treasury police that probably was most responsible for human-rights abuses."

Woodward's own evidence indicates that Casey's C.I.A. might well have been assisting Carranza's assassins. He does not cite El Salvador specifically but does say that the small C.I.A. units provided training to "the [host] country's intelligence service or the local police." He also reports that these unobtrusive teams of U.S. operatives taught "advanced techniques . . . in monitoring terrorists," and says that they supplied their clients with "the best automatic weapons and handguns." Interesting stuff, especially if you flip back to page 262, where Woodward makes an important revelation: Casey met secretly with Carranza in mid-1983. Casey wanted the Salvadoran death squads to stop killing so many unarmed civilians, so he

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arranged a private meeting. Presumably Casey thought that Carranza, his employee, had influence, if not control, over the death squads.

But the famous investigative reporter allowed his sources to lead him away from the full implications of this intriguing story. Woodward accepts that the Director of Central Intelligence didn't know what his low-level subordinates were really doing: "There were so many two- or three-man teams from . . . the Office of Technical Service running around that no one, including Casey, could count them all." If this were true, it suggests the C.I.A. was out of control. If it isn't true, it suggests that Casey just might have been familiar with the quiet work of his boys in San Salvador.

Rather than ask Casey what the C.I.A. was actually doing in El Salvador, Woodward dutifully accepts the word of his sources that Carranza was merely an "informant" for the agency. (Surely the beneficiaries of C.I.A. largesse must do something more than *talk* to earn $90,000.) Most astonishing, Woodward ignores all his evidence and repeats the dubious assertion (made by Casey) that "Carranza himself was pretty clean." In fact, when Carranza was in power in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Salvadoran military monitored its civilian opponents and published official lists of "terrorists." The peasant organizers, professors, Christian and Social Democrats and labor leaders whose names appeared on the lists were frequent victims of the military death squads.

Because Carranza himself apparently did not pull the trigger on innocent civilians, Woodward absolves him of all responsibility for the death squad killings. And, in Woodward's mind, absolving Carranza also absolves Casey. Bureaucratic responsibility does not interest Woodward. When Bob Woodward searches for a smoking gun, he wants to see Casey himself blowing away the wisps from those "high-quality weapons and handguns" dispensed overseas.

The hunt for the smoking gun, though, leads Woodward astray. When he does find one, as in the car bombing story, he overemphasizes Casey's personal culpability for the "rogue operation." He does not explore the longstanding unofficial relationships between Middle Eastern intelligence services that make such "rogue operations" (including the Iran/*contra* diversion) a matter of course. When Woodward does not find a smoking gun, as in El Salvador, he loses reportorial interest and leaves obvious questions unasked.

A reporter with less access than Woodward might have tried to document the exact nature of the C.I.A.'s relationship with Carranza or, more recently, with another powerful Salvadoran colonel, Roberto Mauricio Staben. *The New York Times* has already reported that Staben, like Carranza, is friendly with C.I.A. officials in San Salvador. And Staben, like Carranza, is widely reputed to have directed death squads—though few officials, even in the Reagan State Department, claim that Staben himself is "pretty clean."

Woodward might ask his many sources in the intelligence community: What sort of routine assistance did the blandly named Office of Technical Service provide to Carranza and Staben? The answer would provide the key to understanding one of the most secret of the C.I.A.'s secret wars. With a little digging, Woodward might have been able to describe the role that William Casey's C.I.A. played in establishing and operating the right-wing military death squads in El Salvador that killed hundreds of civilians. If he had, a lot more readers of *Veil* would have said, "Holy shit." □

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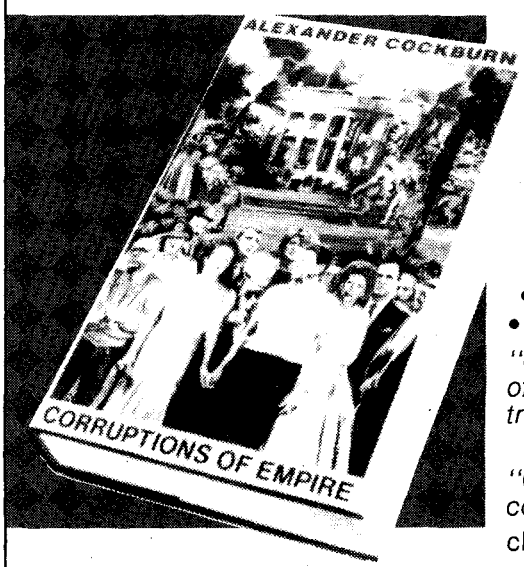

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Old Lessons

SEAN WILENTZ

IF I HAD A HAMMER . . . : The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left. *By Maurice Isserman. Basic Books. 259 pp. $18.95.*

Maurice Isserman is quickly emerging as one of the principal historians of modern U.S. radicalism. The author of an important book on American Communism in the 1940s, he has now extended his studies into the 1950s and early 1960s. His long-term project is nothing less than a thorough re-evaluation of the American left since the Great Depression—a task that requires the kind of scholarly craftsmanship and breadth usually associated with an earlier generation of political historians. These qualities, along with Isserman's mordant wit and sense of irony, make *If I Had a Hammer* . . . a pleasure to read. Better still, the book challenges our basic thinking about the supposed dark ages of American radicalism.

Isserman begins by puncturing the persistent sentimental myth that McCarthyism killed the old left, reminding us that the witch hunters could not destroy the old left's main organization, the Communist Party. Only in 1956, more than a year after McCarthy's fall, did the C.P. face its devastating moment of truth, with Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin and the Soviet invasion of Hungary. By 1958, three-quarters of its membership had quit and the party was reduced to a rump of diehards, commanded by the ruthless old Bolshevik William Z. Foster.

Isserman hardly mourns these events, for he argues that they cleared the way for a renaissance in American radicalism. While the old left organizations floundered, veteran old leftists carried on and tried to regroup. Isserman discusses four old-left offshoots in connection with this revival: the dissident Communists who tried to reform the party from within during 1956 and 1957, before departing in defeat; the ex-Trotskyist Max Shachtman's Independent Socialist League; the *Dissent* writers, led by the ex-Shachtmanite Irving Howe; and the radical pacifists, a motley collection of conscientious objectors from World War II, followers of A.J. Muste, Quakers, Catholic Workers and "inner revolution" communards.

The efforts of these groups to mold mounting discontent into a "new left" came to almost nothing, and Isserman attempts to explain why. The pacifists, he claims, converted few people to their beliefs. The *Dissent* crowd crafted a politics of subtlety, but no political organization in which to test their ideas. The Shachtmanites (who come in for some of Isserman's heaviest criticism) clung to their nearly pathological sectarianism and followed their leader rightward, eventually standing with the A.F.L.-C.I.O. against the anti-Vietnam War movement. The ex-Communists drifted apart: although they would later be active and influential, their political presence in the late 1950s only ignited the destructive passions of the left-wing anti-Communists.

Above all, Isserman observes, the promising "new left" ran into "some of the same sectarian habits that had done so much to cripple the old American Left." By the time Students for a Democratic Society arrived as the true harbinger of the New Left in the early 1960s, its organizers had no stomach for their elders' squabbles. Sadly, neither the old veterans nor the Young Turks realized how much they believed in common; tragically, the veterans did not hand over any solid organization. Both problems—especially, Isserman concludes, the second—contributed to the New Left's own eventual self-destruction.

Readers of James Miller's excellent new study of S.D.S., *"Democracy Is in the Streets,"* will recognize parts of this story; so will those who've read Howe's *A Margin of Hope*, Michael Harrington's *Fragments of the Century* or the numerous autobiographies of former Communists. But Isserman adds abundant detail about significant spokesmen and half-forgotten controversies which these other authors only mention. His chapter on Shachtman alone is practically worth the price of the book; it offers the first extended scholarly appreciation of this elusive, critically important man. His accounts of the voyage of the pacifist ship The Golden Rule (the 1950s' Greenpeace), of SANE's run-

Sean Wilentz is the author of Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788–1850 *(Oxford University Press).*

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in with Senator Thomas Dodd and other episodes are also illuminating. Now and again, he tosses in a telling bit of left-wing lore: Did you know that Max Shachtman makes a comical appearance, besplattered with potato salad, in Allen Ginsberg's "Howl"? And throughout the book, he displays a refreshing sense of humor about the left's foibles.

Most important, Isserman gives the late 1950s their proper place as a key moment in left-wing political history, uncovering all kinds of leftist activity in the years before Port Huron. But one still wonders if his book adequately assesses the strengths and weaknesses of this renaissance. Because Isserman is an honest as well as a diligent historian, he provides enough background material to let us draw our own conclusions.

If we were to judge solely from the political ideas expressed by dissident Communists in 1956 and 1957, the revival would seem to have been an extremely minor affair. The virtues they brought out of the party had to do with their tireless attention to strategy and tactics, linked to a gut-level populism and a certain principled insistence on racial equality. Blazing new intellectual trails was not their forte. After so many years of studied loyalty to the correct line, any deviation began to seem audacious. Framed this way, their intraparty debates have the weird flavor of an ersatz intellectual liberation.

Listen closely to some of the C.P. dissenters whom Isserman quotes. One complains of the Party's distance from "mass organizations of the people"; another goes so far as to defend the discredited former party leader Earl Browder, Stalin's chief American apologist in the 1930s and 1940s. The dissidents' reform proposals consisted of one call for a new "united mass party of socialism" (shades of the Popular Front) and another for a more modest "political association" (shades of the mid-1940s). Much of this failed to move too far beyond the frontiers of "Browderism"; the rest—the more searching reappraisals of Bolshevism, democracy and the American Communist movement—failed to yield, in Isserman's words, "a meaningful alternative political program or vision."

Anyone interested in political ideas would have done far better to hang around the Shachtmanites (for all their scholasticism and skulduggery). In 1939–40, while still a professed Leninist, Shachtman came up with an original American Marxist critique of Soviet Communism (which caused a breach with his own mentor, Leon Trotsky). According to Shachtman, the Soviet Union was neither capitalist nor socialist but "bureaucratic collectivist." Changing Soviet Communism, he insisted, would require a thoroughgoing social revolution, not simply a political one. This powerful idea and the debate it provoked occupied other left-wing thinkers (among them C.L.R. James and Hannah Arendt) and inspired younger Shachtmanites in the 1950s.

Then there was "realignment," Shachtman's pet project of the 1950s. Realignment meant enfranchising Southern blacks, breaking the backs of the Dixiecrats and turning the Democratic Party into a coalition of radicals, liberals, blacks and labor, in a foreshadowing of Democratic Socialists of America (where many onetime Shachtmanites hold important positions) and the Rainbow Coalition. That Shachtman himself later turned realignment into his own brand of embryonic neoconservatism should not obscure its original radical logic.

Further proof of the Shachtmanites' intellectual vitality came with the arrival of Irving Howe and *Dissent*. Howe broke with Shachtman in 1952, fed up at last

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with the I.S.L.'s sectarianism and millennial rhetoric. When he and his friends founded their magazine two years later, they harbored little hope for any American left-wing revival. They wrote accordingly, in a mode that Isserman astutely calls "tired heroism." Yet when the revival came, Howe energetically leapt into the fray with the intellectual hardihood he had honed as one of "Max's boys."

Not everything in the early *Dissent* reads well today; Isserman rightly criticizes some of the essays on foreign policy, for example, for their wishful thinking about the potential benevolence of the U.S. State Department. But the magazine also bristled with the sharp thinking that was so badly needed in the 1950s: indictments of McCarthyism and quisling liberalism, the demolition of the myth of the happy worker, articles on poverty, peace and the civil rights movement. *Dissent* was conceived as an independent forum for socialist ideas, freed from the traditional constraints of "theoretical" work. It seems beside the point to regret (as Isserman does) that Howe and his friends couldn't also form a political party.

Finally, Isserman underrates the pacifists' importance in the late 1950s and after—which is easy to do. American pacifism has always attracted many admirers and few active adherents. Unquestionably, however, pacifism as an ideal of simplicity, generosity and inner revolution lay at the heart of American radicalism from the mid-1950s onward. Isserman doesn't see this: The only connection he finds between pacifism and the 1960s movements is a farfetched one, linking the pacifists' penchant for symbolic self-sacrifice to the self-testing that went into the Days of Rage, "Weatherman's act of *Satyagraha*."

Yet there was much more. There was the Quaker tradition, which shaped what came to be known as participatory democracy. There was Bayard Rustin's role as an adviser to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Martin Luther King Jr., helping to turn Christian instinct into a culture of resistance. (Isserman has much to say about Rustin, but amazingly little about King's work in the late 1950s.) There was Allen Ginsberg, first with his "happy nut" beat friends, then with his harmonium and his "Om"s and his politics of sexual transparence and cosmic transcendence. There was Dwight Macdonald and his dream of decentralized radical change. There was Paul Goodman and *Growing Up Absurd* and *Communitas*.

The followers of pacifism made the late 1950s revival a cultural as well as a political phenomenon. More than any other radical group, they went on to capture the imaginations of millions of Americans. If their utopian vision did not give rise to a new party, it did buoy an effective mass movement and help change the culture incalculably for the better.

Ideally, there should have been some way, in about 1959, to combine the organizational know-how of the former Communists, the good ideas of the Shachtmanites, the better ideas of Howe and the *Dissent* writers and the cultural utopianism of the radical pacifists. Why didn't it happen? Isserman blames sectarianism, and there was certainly plenty of that. But a far deeper division rent the American left after 1956. Then as now, leftists of wildly different temperaments could see eye to eye on most issues. Everyone wanted more jobs, better housing, racial justice, world peace; everyone thought capitalism was at the root of the problem. On foreign policy, however, and, more generally, on Communism, American leftists had been deeply divided since 1917.

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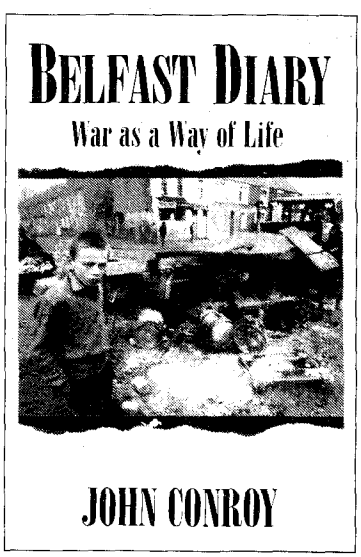

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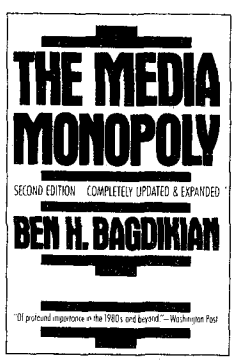

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munist tradition—held to their belief that Communism was a band on the left-wing spectrum, regrettable when it came to show trials and mass liquidations, admirable in providing social services and promoting liberation movements around the world. Many of them retained nostalgic attachments to the socialist motherland and looked hopefully for signs that Moscow was reforming itself; others distanced themselves from the Soviet model to embrace Yugoslavia, China and later Cuba as better examples of socialist reconstruction. At the very least, people on this part of the left tendered "critical solidarity" to various Communist movements—which led them, on occasion, to have trouble distinguishing between a radical democrat and a "progressive" totalitarian.

Other leftists—including Howe, Macdonald and the most interesting political thinkers—believed that Communism (whatever its nationality) had long since forfeited any claim to be taken seriously as a socialist or egalitarian ideology. They looked askance at assertions that Moscow was reforming itself, and reminded everyone of the broken promises of past Soviet reformations. They challenged critical solidarity as an updated form of fellow traveling, involving a great deal of solidarity and not much criticism. Although they came slowly to understand that Communism was not a monolith, they insisted that the suppression of dissent and the Soviet role in the Third World (and Eastern Europe) were part of the same hateful system. They tended to be very touchy on the subject of democracy—so touchy that, unless they were careful, some of them were apt to start confusing mercenary thugs with freedom fighters and swerve to the right.

Isserman too often sees this division as a matter of doctrinal niceties, and implies that most late 1950s radicals were simply kept disunited by a bunch of pigheaded sectarians. In pressing this case, he tends to make the ex-Communists, their sympathizers and the earnest promoters of the early "new left" look like victims once again—victims, this time, not of right-wing reaction but of left-wing anti-Communist fractiousness.

If the project of uniting the old left's remnants was hopeless from the start, the New Left itself was not necessarily doomed. Hence the final riddle: How could the New Left, born with so much promise and with the lessons of the 1950s before it, have ended up replicating so much of the worst old-left theory and practice? What, exactly, did S.D.S. fail to learn?

In part, Isserman says, the missed lessons had to do with organizational matters: The 1950s revival failed to solidify any institutional base and the young radicals had little admiration for old-style discipline and patience; thus, S.D.S. squandered its energies. Up to a point this makes sense, as those of us who participated in the chaos and manipulation of any late 1960s S.D.S. chapter meeting can attest. One could argue, though, that the early S.D.S. members were organizational geniuses. Luck alone can't explain S.D.S.'s success in helping to build the antiwar movement into a national force. There was also the S.D.S. members' flexibility and élan, their disregard for the conventional organizing wisdom, their desire (muddled as it sometimes was) to make their movement match their highest aspirations for a political community.

S.D.S.'s fundamental problem was intellectual, not institutional—and it led to a replay of the old conflicts about Communism. As Isserman shows, the early S.D.S. learned a great deal from ideas that were in the air after 1956—from the writings of Howe, Harrington and Lewis Coser as well as from Albert Camus and C. Wright Mills. Among other things, the student radicals learned to distance themselves from the immutably undemocratic Communist tradition—to distinguish carefully between cold war anti-Communism and left-wing anti-Communism. Then, in one great existential leap, the early S.D.S. attempted to build a new kind of radicalism. Here was a wonderful burst of creative politics—clearly in keeping with the best spirit of 1950s leftism.

Soon after Port Huron, however, S.D.S. began taking a dim view of all kinds of anti-Communism, as an old fogey's hang-up and a liberal snare. Connections with anti-Communist radicals like Howe short-circuited; dubious writings like Mills's *Listen, Yankee!* gained an attentive readership in the movement; ideas like "realignment"—taken seriously in S.D.S. through 1964—fell by the wayside. Various updated pieties of the Communist tradition—anti-anti-Communism, a crude interpretation of "corporate liberalism"—began to permeate the organization.

The full story of this gradual reorientation has yet to be told. Certainly, though, a spurious logic took hold in S.D.S. and acquired a tone of moral loftiness once the anti-Communist liberals in Washington began napalming the peasantry of Southeast Asia. Hatred of American imperialism turned into support for Communists fighting the United States in the highlands and rice paddies; by the late 1960s, this support had deepened into disastrous identification with Third World Communism. Thus S.D.S. traveled from a profound sympathy with the oppressed to a love affair with the National Liberation Front, from Port Huron to the Days of Rage.

It has taken American radicalism nearly twenty years to recover from this backdoor revival of the Communist tradition, and from the apocalyptic despair that marked the New Left's fall. Reading Isserman brings a bitter recognition of what might have been and of all that went wrong. It also brings a reminder that the old left-wing divisions have not disappeared; they play themselves out repeatedly in the editorials and letters columns of today's left-wing press.

In the end, though, this is not a discouraging book. At the very least, it dispels some of the gloominess of the Reagan era; if the 1950s could produce a left-wing renaissance, perhaps we should be less pessimistic about the late 1980s. Much of the spirit and many of the thinkers who enlivened late 1950s radicalism are still alive. With the rise of feminism and the other social movements of the last fifteen years, they have even been fortified. New ideas are, to be sure, harder to find, in part (as Casey Blake and Russell Jacoby complain) because of the academicization of nearly an entire generation of left-wing intellectuals. Still, if disillusionment brings wisdom, there is still a chance that the American left can finally build on the late 1950s' legacy, finally free itself from the Communist tradition without succumbing to cold war liberalism, finally make itself into something more than a marginal force for good. □

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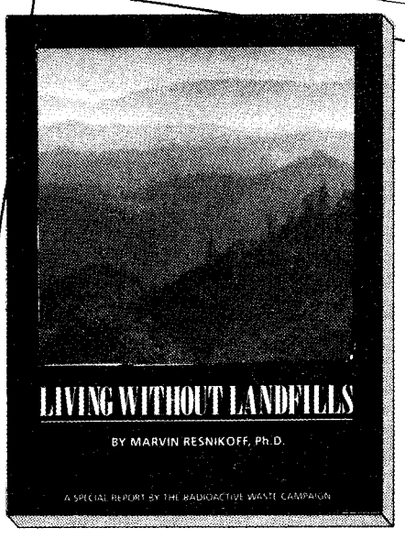
THEATER.

THOMAS M. DISCH

Burn This
Late Nite Comic
Mort Sahl on Broadway!
Anything Goes
Cabaret
Birds of Paradise

I can't resist beginning this rave for *Burn This* by complimenting Lanford Wilson on the cleverness of the title he has given to his new play at the Plymouth Theatre, even though such a compliment may be in doubtful taste, since it was also the title, five years ago, of a collection of my poems published in London. I can't help thinking it's a better title for a book, which is by its nature burnable, than for a play, which isn't, but in either case it is attention getting, which is a title's first priority, and I don't begrudge Wilson—or any other playwright, novelist or movie maker—the free use of the title. A title, after all, can't be copyrighted. As well might the one other serious playwright on Broadway object to having to share his last name (N.B., the two Wilsons, August and Lanford, are not related).

Seriousness, in the theater, is generally equated with tragedy, or with comedies of a nonrepresentational Beckettish cast, and by such a reckoning ***Burn This*** may not be serious. In a formal sense, it is an entirely traditional romantic comedy, in which a boy and a girl meet, fall in love, overcome difficulties (his pride, her suitors) and wind up in a clinch as the lights fade. Along the way to the happy ending there is a steady flow of sophisticated repartee, one-liners and slapstick shticks: a toilet joke, drunken roistering. **What makes *Burn This* serious, even so, is that the lovers lock** into their final clinch with such dismay and regret that they might as well have entered a suicide pact as become lovers, and the audience cannot help sharing their dark feelings. Love in this play is a grim prospect, because the object of that love is the appalling and magnificent John Malkovich. Indeed, the play has no other concern than the effect of John Malkovich on the three other performers, as **Pale (that's his name, presumably because of his wan complexion)** sweeps into their stuffy upper-bohemian lives, throwing open the windows of



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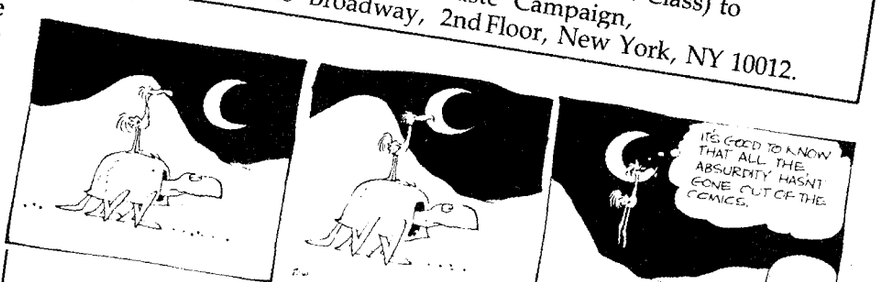

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their SoHo loft, throwing up in the toilet, throwing fits and sucker-punches. Though Joan Allen, Jonathan Hogan and Lou Liberatore are all capable actors, there is little for them to do in the face of Malkovich's barnstorming but to stand back and marvel with the rest of us. Against her better judgment Anna Mann (that's Joan Allen's odd name) admits Pale to her bedroom, though he has scarcely bothered to knock.

In the second act Pale asserts his claim over the heroine by brawling with her too-well-bred suitor (a writer), a fight he loses by virtue of drunkenness, though by losing he wins readmittance to her bedroom. Then, in a scene of quirky tenderness, Pale persuades Anna's gay roommate (played by Lou Liberatore with consummate gallantry) to surrender his claims as Anna's co-householder. Pale dons Anna's bathrobe, fusses over the proper way to make tea and brags quietly about his abilities as a cook. With these assurances that Pale is not the perfect male chauvinist his earlier rantings made him seem, Anna's gay roommate bows out of her life with a written note that includes the title as its last line, condemning Anna, in effect, to her tragic sexual destiny as Pale's wife and the mother of his children. It looks like the end of her career as a choreographer and of any hope of financial upward mobility.

In such a précis it's hard to believe how effective the play is. Everything depends upon Malkovich, who gives one of those performances, like Brando's Stanley Kowalski, that set a new style in macho sexuality. Pale, like Kowalski, is working class, but the stage now permits and encourages every degree of verbal candor, so instead of having to wrap his blue-collar protagonist in a cloak of sullen inarticulateness, Wilson can supply a torrent of extravagantly obscene rhetoric. The wonder is that Malkovich can turn the individual ugly sentiments he expresses in his first-act mega-monologue into a sum that makes Anna's surrender not just plausible but inevitable. Pale may not be a believable character (half of what he tells us about his past life sounds like lies), but Malkovich has such an authoritative presence that the plot's inconsistencies matter as little as the absurdities of grand opera. Bravo, Wilson. Bravi, tutti. Bravissimo, Malkovich!

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Late Nite Comic is a musical comedy about the romance of an aspiring stand-up comic who is never funny and an aspiring ballerina incapable of dancing. The book by Allan Knee and the songs by Brian Gari perfectly suit such a theme, and Robert LuPone and Teresa Tracy are so ideal for the roles of the lovers that ten days before the Broadway opening the director (who had his name whited off the program I was given) decided that the show no longer had need of his services and departed. As a milestone in the demise of the Broadway musical, *Late Nite Comic* cannot compete with *Roza*, for it lacks both the latter's gigantic budget and a cynicism on a scale that even a tobacco industry P.R. executive might envy. By contrast, the helpless participants in *Late Nite Comic* seem to be embarrassed to be seen exposing themselves in public in such a manner, especially Robert LuPone, who keeps flashing the same winsome smile at us, as though to say, "Hey, if you could see me in some other play, you'd really like me. You would, really."

Mort Sahl on Broadway! represents another evening of mirthless stand-up comedy, but Mort Sahl, to his credit, involves no one else in his shame except his producers. On a superficial level, Sahl's proven unfunniness might be thought to result from his shift in political attitude from his former cautious irreverence to his current smarmy subservience to the Power That Is, i.e., our President. Fully half of Sahl's show is devoted to a nose-browning account of how Sahl was invited to a White House reception and how he fawned at everyone there. Rigoletto couldn't have cozied up to the Duke of Mantua more egregiously.

Watching him, I thought, "What a creep," but now, as it turns out, I realize we're all in his debt! Even as I write this, after Black Monday of 1987, Broadway may owe its very existence to this most supine seeming of stand-up comics, this martyr in the service of a dying art (comedy). For without Sahl's personal sacrifice it might have been Broadway against which the President launched today's bombing raid and not Wall Street. For weeks the theatrical community has been hearing rumors that Reagan would soon seek to retaliate against the entertainment industry for all those years when he had to play second banana to an ape, and to avenge himself for the spurious celebrity accorded to his mortal enemy, Ron Jr. It was said that the threatened demolition of Times Square was simply the groundwork for a bombing mission soon to be conducted by Lieut. Col. Oliver North, who is once again in active military service and straining at the leash. And so it might have been, if Mort Sahl hadn't agreed to sacrifice his own reputation for the sake of the Great White Way. In exchange for his minion's nightly servilities at the Neil Simon Theatre, Reagan has agreed to spare Broadway and has instead leveled his forces against Wall Street. The market may go down in flames, but the legitimate theater can continue for yet a little while. Thanks to Mort Sahl.

As though on purpose to explicate the death of the Broadway musical and the dearth of comedy, Polymorpha, the Muse of Musical Comedy, decreed revivals of two virtually unsinkable old showboats, *Anything Goes* from 1934, which is at the Vivian Beaumont Theater at Lincoln Center, and *Cabaret* from 1966 (but set in 1929-30) at the Imperial. Both productions are intelligently mounted and zestfully performed and seem destined to be the hottest tickets on Broadway, but their success only underlines the prevailing moribund condition of musical theater. Of the thirteen musicals now on Broadway, five are revivals, and three are English imports. Two have been around for twelve and five years. Of the three new shows, one is based on the music of John Philip Sousa, one is a gospel musical and one is by Stephen

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Sondheim. While I have high hopes for all three, each represents an evolutionary path some distance from the generic mainstream, and their success would not much affect the musical's status as an endangered species.

In this situation, we must be thankful for revivals so handsomely produced, not simply for the entertainment they provide but for keeping a certain number of singers and dancers employed, even though the nature of their employment has a more and more antiquarian character, as though they were demonstrating vanished crafts in a museum village, shoeing horses and making butter in wooden churns. It seems quite possible that in ten years time the American musical theater will be in the same state as opera and the symphony orchestra, invalids kept alive only by massive public subsidies. Indeed, the New York City Opera is already pioneering such a curatorial role, most notably with its preserved-in-amber production of the original Harold Prince production of *Sweeney Todd*, which cleaves so close to the original staging that the performers might well be lip-syncing their roles.

Various reasons have been cited for the decline of the musical: the failure of composers to write music that doesn't sound like quadrilles and death marches to those whose musical metabolisms are tuned to rock music; the price of tickets in conjunction with the sleaze and perils of Times Square; the very poor risk that any musical represents for its investors, so that even Tony winners may wind up in the red.

To that list I'd like to add one more, which was suggested to me by the latest crop of hits and flops: the reliance of librettists on stock figures and situations that are no longer mythically seaworthy. Take the case of the central figures in *Anything Goes* and *Cabaret*: Reno Sweeney and Sally Bowles are essentially the same character—"show girls" and women of easy virtue, gold diggers with hearts of gold, whose musical talents are employed chiefly to advertise the product offered for sale, their sexuality. They are part of a long, high-kicking lineage of chorines that stretches back into the nineteenth century and has included such notable musical sirens and seductresses as Mae West, Edith Piaf and Carol Channing. Recent musicals that have celebrated the same generic figure include *Sweet Charity*, *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* and *Starlight Express*. Formerly, the books of such musicals characteristically allowed the gold digger to be redeemed by love and, like Gigi, enter the state of holy matrimony, or she might—like Camille, Reno Sweeney or the demonic Lola of *Damn Yankees*—ruefully surrender her claim to the tenor's love. But she could not, as the ending of *Cabaret* makes clear, have it both ways. If a woman continues to sing and dance, she must relinquish wedded bliss.

I would suggest that this no longer reflects the reality of most women's lives, much less of their hopes. Couples who attend a musical (and the musical comedy is a venue, like Noah's Ark, that caters primarily to couples) are basically looking for a dramatic affirmation of coupledness, of love and marriage (which go together like a horse and carriage). However, the gradual diffusion of feminist principles has undermined the unspoken assumptions of conventional musical comedy. The solution would seem simple enough: Produce unconventional musical comedies. But for producers that is equivalent to taking larger risks, and they would rather try to tinker with the formula than abandon it. Thus, we have a mutant dinosaur such as *Roza*, concerning a chaste prostitute who is the world's ultimate single parent.

Another convention of musical comedy that has become ever more endemic (affecting five out of ten musicals on Broadway) is the musical that is self-reflexively about musicals. This is sometimes a mere mimetic convenience, an easy way to provide a sufficiency of song and dance without straining the conventions of naturalism. *Cabaret* manages to be both a show biz musical and about a larger world than that defined by the footlights. More commonly, however, the self-reflexive musical abounds in songs of besotted narcissism and manic self-reassurance: "We're Simply Wonderful!" and "Bravo for Me!" In a rousing performance, such musical couéism can be infectious, and "Hooray for Hollywood" becomes a cheer for the entire culture of salesmanship, hype and self-promotion, but in shows as lame as *Late Nite Comic* or the recent Off Broadway bummer *Birds of Paradise* the effect is more on the order of watching a derelict in the gutter muttering, "Every day in every way I am getting better and better."

The book for *Birds of Paradise* was written by its lyricist, Willie Holzman, and composer David Evans and is loosely

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based on Chekhov's *Seagull* but also, self-reflexively, on the circumstances of its production, since it is about a thoroughly misbegotten musical whipped into shape by a famous director. In the play he's called Lawrence Wood; in the program credits he is Arthur Laurents. In neither case does he succeed in making a silk purse out of a sow's ear. Todd Graff as the juvenile male lead has a charm and energy that can't be gainsaid, but that can't substitute for the songs he's saddled with.

As for giving credit where it's due to the casts and production staffs of *Anything Goes* and *Cabaret*, almost everyone in both shows deserves high praise. Physically, *Anything Goes* is the greater spectacle. Tony Walton's ship-shaped set with an orchestra on the top deck and retractable brass rails has the streamlined populuxe glitz of a brand-new, red, white and blue 1956 De Soto Firedome, and Patty LuPone as Reno Sweeney comes across as the very spirit of Free Enterprise. As the young lovers, Howard McGillin and Kathleen Mahoney-Bennett are magazine covers of normative perfection, disappearing into their roles the way Poussin's figures vanish into his landscapes. It's all so light and creamy, you could probably return to *Anything Goes* the very next night and enjoy it just as much a second time.

As for *Cabaret*, Joel Grey is utterly memorable. For those who've seen the earlier stage or movie versions, that may be a disincentive to seeing the show again, since he's exactly as good as he was then. Alyson Reed is easier to believe as Sally Bowles than Liza Minelli, but her role and her leading man's (Gregg Edelman) have been much reduced from the movie version and accordingly have less dramatic impact, while the roles of Fräulein Schneider (Regina Resnik) and her Jewish suitor Herr Schultz (Werner Klemperer) have been expanded almost to parity with the stars, and Resnik and Klemperer steal as much of the show as Joel Grey has left to be stolen.

The South African musical spectacle *Sarafina!* has just opened at the Mitzi E. Newhouse Theater at Lincoln Center, in the basement, so to speak, of *Anything Goes*. I could write a perfectly sincere review just stringing together the adjectives press agents most love: breathtaking, sensational, spectacular, etc. But for the time being I'll let "You must see it" do for the rest, and next week I'll have caught my breath and be able to say why. □

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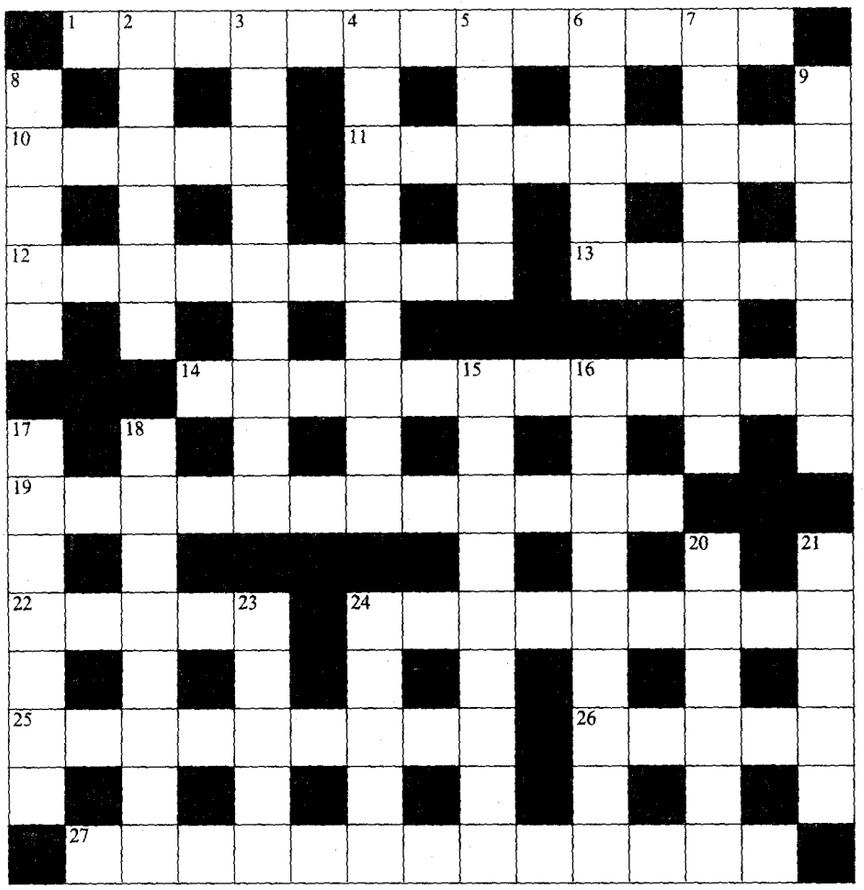

ACROSS

1 Such a storyteller could never have a 21. (9,4)
10 Finnegan had a well-known one, when not asleep. (5)
11 Where Shirley found her animal crackers to be precariously placed. (2,3,4)
12 More than one president might answer to it, if only called first and last. (4,5)
13 Fragrant organic compound made from trees. (5)
14 Sinclair possibly associated with an automobile turnover? No, much better known, and by this pen name. (5,7)
19 A reputed pessimist, but you'll find such hope near impossible! (12)
22 A childish rejoinder in an argument, if you say it is, with a touch of offensiveness. (5)
24 A variety of apple (not early), associated with certain places where you might find the people appealing, too. (9)
25 Merit is not usually found in the continent, rather like sagebrush. (9)
26 Broken reeds possibly associated with a ceremonial dinner. (5)
27 One might, if the iterative type, when a sort of peer makes amends for an imaginary creature. (6,7)

DOWN

2 and 18 In her case, she is likely to cut Hercules short as a protagonist. (6,8)
3 Look at what Pagliacci put on—it might involve a liner! (3,6)
4 I am shortly to be found in a magazine like this—but you might associate it with cartoons. (9)
5 This park is really a town . . . (5)
6 . . . and this city is evidently only for the faithful. (5)
7 Our time, in short, has a choice of formal acceptance. (8)
8 Might the bookburners try to do away with one of the Little Women by means of this instrument? (5)
9 Passes as such, perhaps, in a screwy sort of way. (7)
15 The winner stretched out by the lake? (9)
16 Bad listeners? (When one does, there's likely to be another hitch!) (9)
17 Where the butt-end might be located? (7)
18 See 2 down
20 One of the destroyers of Kiev and Aleksandropol? (6)
21 Bread-making historian? (5)
23 Valley found in the King Lear drama? (No way!) (5)
24 In the same way placed, it should be of some value. (5)

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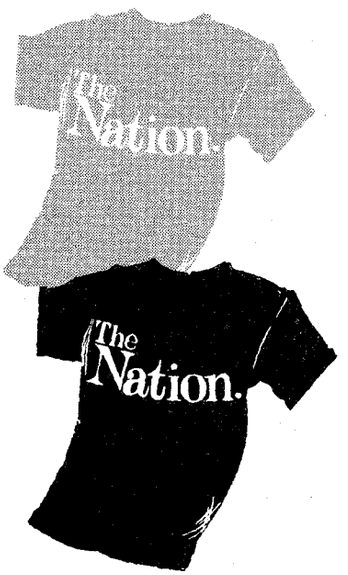

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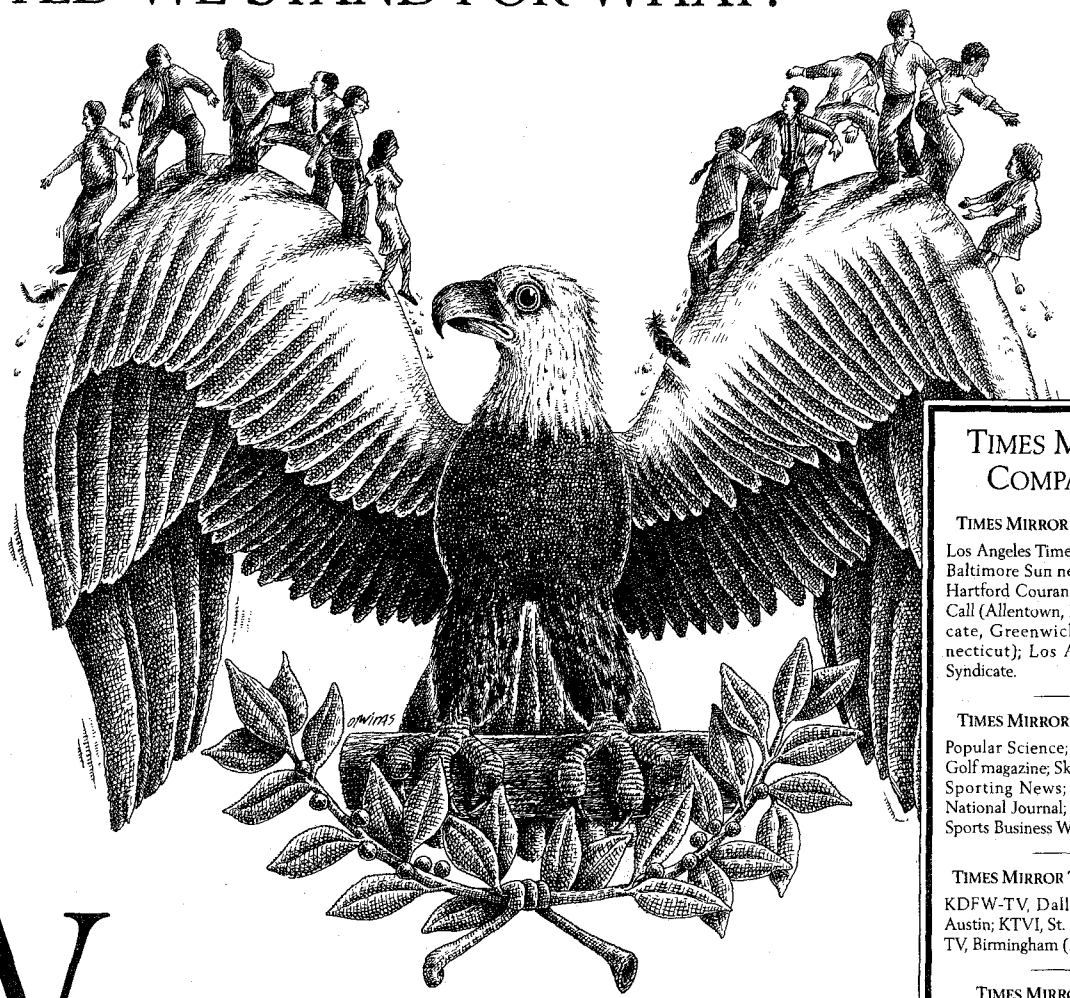

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Militant anti-communism. 56% believe communists are responsible for a lot of the unrest in the U.S. today; 54% think the best way to ensure peace is through military strength.

American exceptionalism. 68% think the U.S. has a boundless ability to solve its problems.

Alienation. 52% say they have no say about what government does; 73% say elected officials in Washington quickly lose touch with the people.

Financial pressure. 43% say they often don't have enough money to make ends meet.

Attitudes toward government. 63% think government is inefficient and wasteful.

Attitudes toward "big business." 77% think too much power is concentrated in too few large corporations.

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